

# YOUNG KLONDIKE

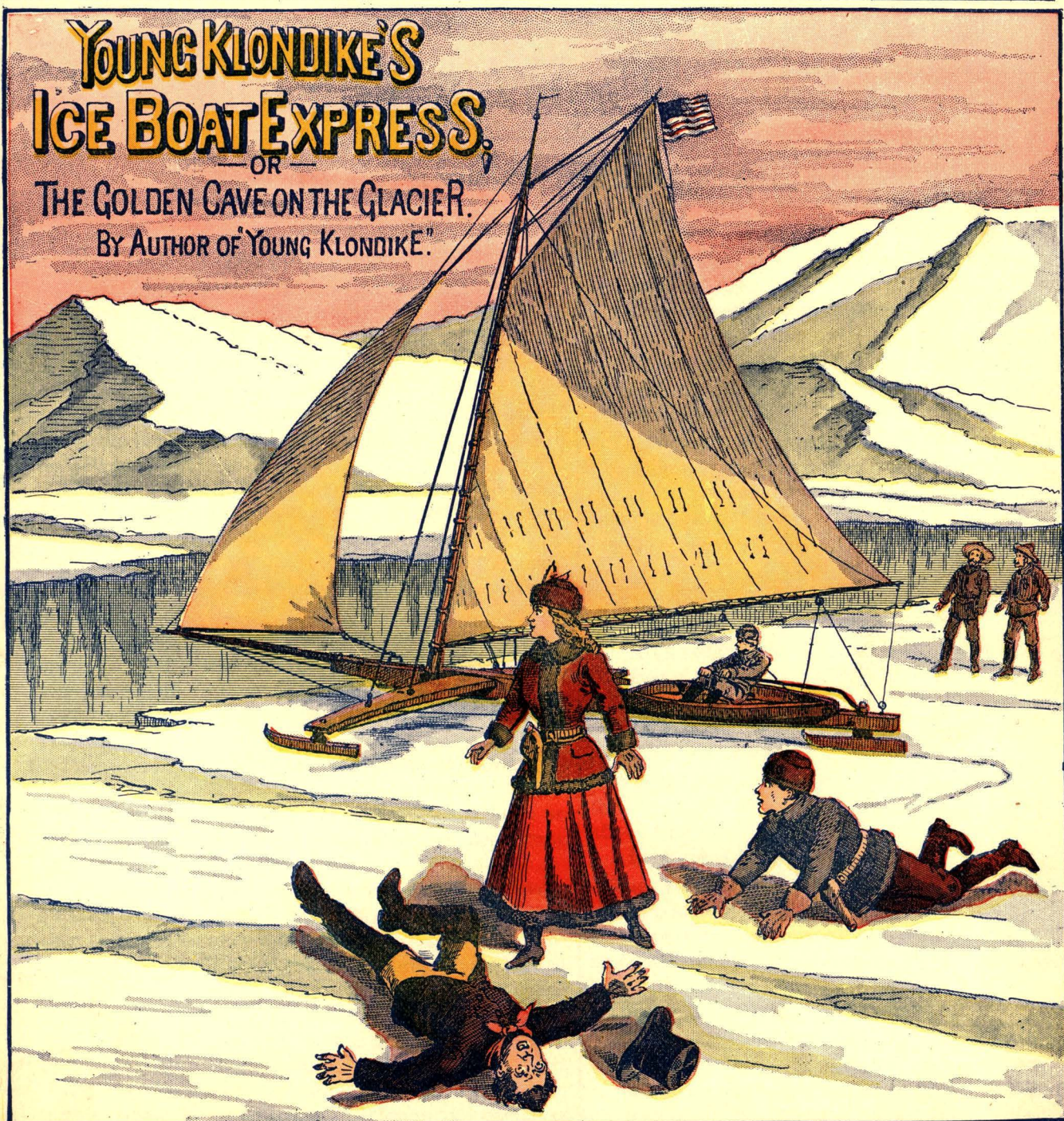
## STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER

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"Jump, Edith! Jump, Dick!" cried Young Klondike. "The ice boat is going into the gorge. Jump for your lives!" Edith sprang off, landing on the ice safely, but Dick missed his footing and fell, while the Unknown went sprawling on his back, but Young Klondike still clung to the ice boat.

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⇒ Stories of a Gold Seeker. ⇐

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## YOUNG KLONDIKE'S ICE BOAT EXPRESS; — OR — THE GOLDEN CAVE ON THE GLACIER.

BY AUTHOR OF YOUNG KLONDIKE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### PROSPECTING IN CARIBOU CREEK.

"NED, this is awful slow work."

"Klondike mining generally is, Dick. That's no new experience for us."

"If we only had some wood."

"But we haven't, so there's no good talking. If we strike it rich, and I think we shall, our labor will be well paid for."

The two speakers—both young men—had just surveyed Caribou creek and fixed upon the spot where they were now working.

The creek was in Valdes Bay, on the Gulf of Alaska, and it was as wild and dreary a place as can well be imagined.

Nothing but bare rocks, ice and snow, with the sea beyond. Not a tree or vestige of vegetation to be seen anywhere.

The winter had just begun, but the creek was not yet frozen over.

The ground to a depth of many feet was frozen as solid as a rock. It always is in these parts.

When wood is obtainable great fires are built to thaw out the ground, and after this has been done sufficiently digging begins.

As there was no wood, the two young men were obliged to use a drill. Then with rendrock cartridges they intended to blow out the hole.

"We'll have all our work for nothing!" exclaimed Dick, suddenly.

"Why?"

"Because the cartridges are frozen, and we've nothing to thaw them with."

It should be understood that rendrock freezes at a high temperature, and when a cartridge is frozen it is practically useless.

"No wood, that's a fact, Dick," cried Ned. "Without wood no fire."

"This means a long journey up the creek to get it."

"I have it!" cried Ned, suddenly. "We're going to break up camp, anyway, so we may as well make use of our log hut."

They soon had a small fire burning, and Ned, sitting before it, began to thaw out the cartridges, turning them round and round, so that no one part of them should get too hot.

"Dick, they're cooked to a turn. Now, to use them."

When the cartridge was placed in the hole, a cap with a long fuse was attached to it.

"All's ready, Dick!" cried Ned. "Get back quick! I'm going to touch it off!"

Saying this, Ned lighted the fuse.

Dick had run back quickly, and Ned lost no time in following his example.

Where they were working was just on the edge of the creek, which took a sudden turn a few yards above them.

"Look, look!" cried Dick.

The two young men stared in amazement at a strange-looking object that came round the bend.

A great three-cornered sail was spread, and the mast which supported it rose out of what appeared to be a raft.

On the raft a man was standing.

"That beats everything. Never saw such a craft as that in my life before, Ned," Dick exclaimed.

But Ned was not thinking of this. Suddenly the danger in which the man on the raft was occurred to him.

The strange vessel was sailing rapidly to the very spot where the explosion was about to take place.

The rendrock would blow the craft and its occupant to pieces.

"Hello, mister! Hello!" shouted Ned at the top of his voice, running up the creek as he spoke.

"Great Heavens! He'll be killed!" cried Dick.

"Back! Back!" shouted Ned, excitedly.

The man on the raft never moved. His back was towards the boys, and he was looking across the river. All their shouting did not make him turn round, and the two young men made enough noise now to wake the dead.

"He can't be alive!" cried Dick, "or he'd hear us."

"Supposing he's deaf?"

"That must be it. How can we warn him? To think of the poor creature being blown to pieces is awful. Why not put out the fuse?"

"Don't monkey with that, Dick. It's certain death to do so. It's burned too far down."

"Hello! Hello!"

Dick had his hands to his mouth still shouting in a last vain attempt to warn the man on the raft of the danger into which he was drifting.

Ned realized that these proceedings were useless.

A good idea occurred to him, however.

"Though he's deaf as a post, Dick," he cried, "I guess he ain't blind."

With that Ned picked up a piece of rock about the size of an orange. He threw it so that it passed over the man's head and fell into the water in front of him with a great splash.

Needless to say he turned at once to know where it came from. There was an angry look on his face.

"Keep them blamed stones to yourself," he shouted.

Ned and Dick were pointing to the ground that they had mined, trying their utmost to show the man on the raft the danger that threatened him.

"If he's ever done any mining, Ned, he'll know what we mean," cried Dick.

"He sees it!" shouted Ned.

At this instant the brown face of the stranger became as pale as the snow around him, and a look of terror came over it.

This lasted for a moment or two only, during which the man appeared bewildered. Clearly he did not know how to act. Then he made a rush across his raft, going headforemost into the water as far from the shore as possible.

As he disappeared there was a tremendous explosion.

It seemed to shake the earth. Huge masses of earth and rock flew in all directions.

When all was quiet again all that remained of the strange craft were some pieces of wood drifting on the water.

The explosion had blown it to atoms.

"Where's the man?" cried Dick.

"He must be drowned."

"Say, mister," said a small voice, "any more of them blamed fireworks about?"

The boys were delighted to find he was alive, and immediately they helped him out from under the bank, where he was taking refuge.

As soon as he was on land again he began to abuse them, jumping round to shake the water off himself, and speaking as he did so.

"What in thunder are ye doing, anyway?" he demanded, angrily. "Nice young fellers and no mistake, setting traps for strangers. Darn ye, a little more, and I'd have been a goner."

"We are prospecting for gold," shouted Ned, in the man's ear.

"Old, am I?" asked the stranger, fiercely, misunderstanding what had been said, as deaf people will. "Say, I may be old, but I'm young enough to lick you two, anyway. What the blazes do you call yourselves?"

"Golden & Luckey."

The stranger could not hear Ned. He stared vacantly at him.

"Write it down, Ned," said Dick. "Talking to him makes one dead tired."

Ned followed the suggestion at once.

Taking a pencil from his pocket, he wrote: "We belong to the firm of Golden & Luckey."

The man gave a great jump as he read it.

"I am Ned Golden," wrote Ned. "That is Dick Luckey," he also scribbled in pencil, pointing to Dick as he did so.

"Then you be Young Klondike!" cried the stranger.

Ned nodded his head.

"Course I've heard of both of you, mister. Everybody in Alaska has. Speak a bit quick and I may manage to hear you."

The stranger was quite right. From Dawson City to St. Michael, and from the latter place to Juneau, the firm of Golden & Luckey was a household word, and there was not a miner who had not heard of or seen the two daring young men.

Strange to say the man appeared to hear them now.

Ned had a shrewd suspicion that the mention of his name had had a magical effect upon him.

"I'm a ruined man," whined the stranger.

"Ruined! Nonsense!" cried Ned. "It doesn't take much money or time to build such a raft as that. A few logs and some cord and there you are."

"Say, Young Klondike, that wasn't just an every day sort of raft. Anyway, the boat that it was carrying wasn't."

"The boat it was carrying?"

"Sure. The craft with the big sail was an ice boat."

"And what good is an ice boat?" asked Ned.

"You can't sail over snow on an ice boat."

"But you can over a glacier, young feller."

"What glacier?"

"The Valdes glacier. Say, you must have heard of it."

"Oh, that glacier. Why, yes, I should think I have. But you ain't going to sail about on this glacier all winter just to amuse yourself, are you?"

"Young feller, I'm a poor man—poorer now than I ever was in my life before, and you bet I haven't any time for playing. Hiram Hart's my name—old Hi they mostly calls me. I've done pretty well everything since I came North, and nothing's panned out well, and now to finish the business, you've blown my darned old craft to pieces, and what am I to do?"

"Don't let that worry you. I'll give you the money to build another," said Ned.

"You will?" cried Hart, looking doubtfully at the young man.

"Certainly."

For Ned Golden this was an outlay not worth thinking of, for he was a millionaire many times over. Since he had come to the Klondike his luck had been wonderful, and he and his partners owned many valuable mines, besides having large sums to their credit in several banks in San Francisco and Dawson City.

"Yes, you shall have the boat for sure," said Dick Luckey, "only you haven't told us yet what you're going to do with it."

"To make money with it, to be sure."

"Make money!" repeated Dick. "Don't quite see how you're going to do that."

"Run an express, boss, that's what."

"An express!"

"You bet! An ice boat express right across the Valdes glacier. There's a whole lot of folks what wants to work up to Dawson City, and they'd go Copper river way if it wasn't for that tarnation glacier, and besides, there's the diggings in there that takes some. Tacking across it's darned slow work. Enough to scare any chap. Flying's different, and by gosh, it's flying's the word for it on my craft. 'Stead of days, it'll be a few hours."

"I like this idea," said Ned. "Don't you, Dick?"

"Yes; I believe Mr. Hart is on the right track. There's money in his scheme."

"It shan't be my fault if he doesn't try it, anyway," said Ned. "How long will it take you to get another boat built?" he asked.

"A week," replied Hart.

"What's the cost?"

Old Hi looked at Young Klondike cunningly. He was thinking how high it would be safe to strike him.

"Ought to get it for five hundred dollars," he said.

"Very well; here's the money."

Saying this, Ned Golden took a big roll of bills out of his pocket, and handed over five of one hundred dollars each to Hiram Hart, who clutched them eagerly, stowing them away at once.

"Where's the boat to be built?" asked Dick.

"Up the creek at Tanana—a ten mile tramp, boss. That's nothing, though. When the craft's finished I

shall sail with it right down Caribou creek again. May I ax, mister, if I'll find you here?"

"Don't know why you shouldn't," said Ned. "We have a good many days' work before us. It's no easy job blowing up this frozen ground."

"You ain't got no grub, mister, and something warm to drink, eh?"

"Plenty, over there in the hut. Hello, Dick, there they are, coming up the valley."

Two people had just emerged from the canyon.

One was a girl, and even at the distance at which she was it was clear that she was graceful and pretty. The other was a man of rather remarkable appearance, at least for Alaska.

He was quite short and had on a pair of high cavalry boots which came considerably above his knees. On his head was a tall hat.

When he saw Ned and Dick he commenced to run, shouting to the girl to do the same. In a few minutes he had joined the two boys.

Catching sight of Hiram Hart he stared hard at him for a few moments.

Then he suddenly pounced upon him and seized him by both wrists.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, there's my man now!" he cried, as he sprang forward, and he and Hiram, locked in each other's arms, rolled over into the hole which the boys had just made.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ICE BOAT EXPRESS IS BUILT.

THEY were out of the hole in a moment, the little man dragging his prisoner with him.

"Ye gods and little fishes, I've got you at last!" he cried. "Hold on, though! Wrong again! Beg pardon, friend. I see that I've made a mistake!"

"Tarnation!" exclaimed Hiram, rubbing his head, which had been bumped violently against the rocks, "are you crazy, mister?"

"Crazy? Not much! A little error on my part. No man is infallible."

"You mustn't take any notice of him," said Ned. "It's a way he has. This is my friend, the Unknown."

"Then, by gosh, the sooner he changes his way the pleasanter it's going to be for everybody. Young fellers, if he hadn't been a friend of yours, I'd have filled him with lead."

The Unknown was fond of playing this kind of trick.

He was a detective by profession. All over the world he had traveled, looking for a mysterious individual whom he called "his man."

No one knew what crime this man had committed, nor who he was.

Neither did anybody know the Unknown's real name. He had been with Ned and his friends for a long time now, and Zed was the only name to which he would answer; this was short for Zedekiah, which he claimed was his Christian name.

"Well, Edith," said Ned, turning to the girl, "you haven't brought back any game."

"Didn't fire a shot, Ned; saw nothing."

"Just as I told you, so Dick will have to live on canned goods still."

The girl's name was Edith Welton.

Ned had saved her from a shipwreck on the way to Alaska, and since then she had traveled everywhere with the two boys and the Unknown, sharing all the dangers and privations which fell to their lot. She was a full partner in the firm of Golden & Luckey.

At this point Hiram Hart called attention to the fact that he was still fasting. He was taken to the hut, where he had a good meal.

"Guess I'll push on, boss," he said, speaking to Young Klondike, "so's to make Tanana before dark. So long. You'll see me and my ice boat mighty quick, I'm thinking."

Edith asked for an explanation as soon as the man had gone. The reference to the ice boat puzzled her.

"I don't think we'll ever see him again," she said, when she had heard the story.

"Why not?"

"He's no good. I could see it in his face. He looked quite bad enough to be the man the Unknown is looking for. He has your money, and that's all he wants."

"What is the next move, dear boy?" asked the Unknown. "Have you arranged a programme?"

"Yes," laughed Ned, "a very simple one. We have to sink a shaft here, and try for gold. Get a move on you, Zed."

The two boys and the Unknown went to work, whilst Edith busied herself in the hut in preparing supper for them.

It was very laborious.

As fast as a hole was drilled, a rendrock cartridge was exploded. It took them six days to reach the black sand, eighteen feet from the surface.

Then the gold washing began.

This work proceeded rapidly. There was an abundance of water near at hand.

The sand was dumped into the rocker. Then the water was poured in, passing out the other end.

All day they worked without result. Not one dollar's worth of gold was obtained.

"Suppose we throw this up, Ned," said the Unknown. "I'm fond enough of work, but not when it's useless."

"Yes," laughed Ned. "We know you like work, Zed. You shall help sink the shaft six feet deeper. Maybe it'll pan out better."

Two more days were occupied in drawing dirt from the shaft and washing it. A little gold was left in the rocker, but the quantity was so small that it did not encourage them to proceed.

Dick now proposed to stop work.

"I don't say get right away, Ned, but at any rate we'll try another spot. We haven't struck the right place."

"I'll be blest if I think there's any gold here at

all," said the Unknown. "Wish we hadn't come away round here on a fool's errand."

"I'm dead sure there is," answered Ned. "We got our information from parties who ought to know, and I propose to follow up the work. Just listen. I'll tell you what my plan is."

"Go on."

"We'll make our winter camp right here on Caribou creek."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah," cried the Unknown, "it's impossible. There's nothing left to eat but snow, and cold diet never agreed with me."

"What's the matter with going to Tanana for supplies?"

"The place where Hiram Hart is having his ice boat built?"

"The same, Dick. We'll start right away."

"I think it's too late," said Edith. "Better wait till to-morrow."

"I vote with Edith," said the Unknown. "Recollect it's a case of tramping. If we had our boat, it would be different. That's smashed, you know."

"What do you say, Dick?"

"I say let's go on the move at once. We've no time to waste, Ned. We can fit out at Tanana and be back here in a couple of days, so that we can put in a lot of work before the snow comes."

"Two against two," cried Ned.

"I change my vote," exclaimed the Unknown.

"You desert me?" asked Edith. "Why?"

"Duty beckons me to Tanana, Edith. I have a presentiment I shall find my man there."

The preparations for departure occupied a few minutes.

They saw that the hut was securely fastened. Then taking their rifles they started.

They had nothing but their game to carry. There was no occasion to take any food, for they had only ten miles to walk.

It would be easy to find the way. It was simply a question of following the creek till they came to the town.

The ground was covered with snow to a great depth, but as the surface was frozen a hard crust was formed upon which walking was quite easy.

They had not stopped since they left Valdes Bay, and would not have done so now if it had not been for Dick.

He pointed to some marks on the snow.

"Bear!" he said.

"No doubt, but that's nothing to us."

"It's a good deal. I'd like to have a slice of bear meat, and I say we'd better hunt that bear."

"Not on your life!"

"You don't need to look far for him!" cried the Unknown. "There's brother bear sitting on the rock winking his eyes at us."

"I'll make him wink the other eye!" exclaimed Edith, laughingly, as she brought her rifle to her shoulder.

Edith was the crack shot of the party, having had long practice in the Tule lands of California.

Bang!

The firing of the shot and the disappearance of the bear seemed to take place together. At any rate, the bear was no longer to be seen.

"You hit him, Edith!" cried Dick, excitedly. "Perhaps he's not dead, but he soon will be. I'll make a goner of him."

Saying this, Dick dashed up towards the rocks where the bear was when he was first seen.

More leisurely the others followed him.

Suddenly, they saw Dick throw up his hands and topple forward. Where he had gone was more than they could say.

"Dick! Dick!" shouted Ned, as he ran forward.

No reply came.

Edith turned pale.

"He may be killed," she gasped.

The Unknown kept his thoughts to himself.

In less than two minutes all three stood at the place from which Dick had gone. The edge of the rock was as smooth as glass.

The Unknown grasped Ned by the arm just as he was sliding down.

"There's to reason why you shouldn't look for Dick," said the Unknown, "but not that way."

The ground on the other side of the rock sloped towards the river. It was not very steep, and nothing but its slippery surface made the descent difficult.

"He's missed his footing and slid right down!" cried Ned. "We shall find him. Dick, Dick!"

Again there was no reply, and this fact alarmed the three friends.

Cautiously they descended, making as little noise as possible.

Then, peering around the corner, a fearful sight met their eyes. Dick was lying on his back on the ground near the edge of the creek. Over him was standing a great black bear.

"If he moves he's a dead man," said the Unknown.

Young Klondike's heart almost ceased to beat.

"We cannot save him!" he gasped.

Bang!

"That settles him, I think," said Edith, quietly.

She had acted while the others were talking. And her shot told. The bear was mortally wounded. He rolled over instantly, his huge body falling off the bank into the creek.

Dick sprang to his feet.

"I know who fired that shot! Thanks, Edith," he exclaimed.

"You're not hurt?" inquired Ned, in amazement.

"Bruised a bit, that's all. I slid down the rock where the bear was waiting for me. Anyway, I have some fresh meat."

"Not an ounce on your bill of fare to-night," laughed the Unknown. "He's in the river."

"Come! Come!" cried Ned. "Talk as we go. We've lost too much time already. We can't bother to get the bear."

So they resumed their journey, eventually reaching Tanana just as it was dark.

"Suppose we try to find Hiram Hart," said Dick.

"You don't have to look far, dear boy," the Unknown observed. "If that isn't his voice my name is——"

"Your name?"

"Ned, I think we agreed my name was Zed."

Out of a hut came a flying body, followed by the report of several shots rapidly fired.

The flying body was a man who almost knocked Young Klondike down as he flew past. He landed in the snow where he lay motionless.

"Hiram Hart, sure enough," said Ned, bending over him.

"Is he dead?" asked Dick.

"No, he's breathing, right enough. He doesn't appear to have been hit."

"Not by a bullet," said the Unknown, "but by a club. Look here, his skull's cracked. What's to be done with him?"

"We can't leave him here. We'll carry him in."

The owner of the hut strongly objected, but changed his mind when Ned told him who he was and offered to pay for the care bestowed upon him.

"He's no good, Young Klondike," said the man. "Came back here with five hundred dollars, and where is it now? Not a red in his pocket."

"He was going to buy an ice boat with the money."

"What! Did he work that old racket on you? Ha, ha! Old Hi's pretty slick. Do I think he'll die? Can't say, only we won't wear very deep mourning if he does. Why was he thrown out? He got into a row with another man who's skipped."

It was decided to stay where they were for the night as there was plenty of room.

The two boys and the Unknown had beds in the kitchen, and Edith found herself very comfortably off in a sort of storeroom, which was dry and warm.

"Evidently this is the place where we have to buy all the supplies for our winter camp," said Young Klondike, next morning, as they were having breakfast.

"That saves a lot of trouble," cried Dick.

"How's Hiram Hart to-day?"

"Better, Edith, but it will be a long time before he will be about again."

"I knew he was no good. But still, I'm glad we met him."

"Why?"

"Because it has put an idea into my head. Why shouldn't we have an ice boat ourselves?"

"And run over the Valdes glacier on it. Hurrah!" cried Dick. "That's great! Beat a winter camp out of sight. A precious lot more fun in it, and money too, I'm thinking. Anyhow it will be a change."

The Unknown supported the proposal instantly. The prospect of running through the terrible cold of a Klondike winter was not an attractive one, although they had done this the winter before.

"Dear boy, you must do it," he said. "You can have your ice boat built right here. If old Hi could get one, you can. I like to see the firm of Golden & Luckey branching out into new lines."

"If we can get the boat," said Ned, "We will certainly give it a trial. We will see about it at once."

It was found there was no difficulty in the way.

There was plenty of wood at Tanana, and a man who was able to build an ice boat. In a rough kind of way it is true, but sufficiently strong for the purpose.

"We shall want to get in a supply for the winter," said Ned. "So we may as well take it down with us to Valdes Bay, and store the stuff in the log hut there."

This seemed to be a very sensible plan, so it was adopted.

In six days the ice boat was finished.

On the seventh a raft left Tanana carrying all the party, as well as Young Klondike's Ice Boat Express.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ICE BOAT EXPRESS CROSSES THE GLACIER.

ON the way down the creek to Valdes Bay Young Klondike's party discussed their plans.

They had ample time to do so, for the raft occupied little of their attention.

The current carried it along, and at the same time kept it away from the bank.

"There is not much to settle," said Dick; "when we get to Valdes Bay we strike right out for the glacier."

"Just where is this glacier," asked Ned, "I'd like to know that."

"Look on the map, Ned. That will tell us."

This seemed a reasonable suggestion and it was adopted. The Valdes glacier was, however, not marked down on the map, which is not to be wondered at, seeing that it is only quite recently this country has attracted attention.

The Unknown sat smiling, and Dick happened to look at him and saw that he had something on his mind.

"I'll bet Zed knows something about it. There's not much he doesn't know!" he exclaimed.

"What I do know about it," said the Unknown, "is from hearsay. I've never been there, dear boy."

"Well, tell us what you've heard."

"And where you heard it," Ned remarked. "If it isn't reliable it will be thrown out of court."

"Before you were out of your beds this morning I had a chat," said the Unknown, "with a man I met at Tanana. He'd never been across the glacier, but he'd met several men who had. It starts near Valdes Bay at a height of nearly five thousand feet above sea level."

"Five thousand feet!" exclaimed Dick. "Why, we can't sail our ice boat up such an ascent as that."

"You don't have to. You'll have to drag it up to

that height, and then you'll have plain sailing before you."

"Is there much ice, Zed?"

"Thirty miles straight ahead, Dick. The glacier is in a valley about three miles wide, bounded by great hills, whose peaks are perpetually covered with snow."

"What a fearful place!" cried Edith. "It don't sound nice a bit."

"Fearful? Why, it's great, Edith!" exclaimed Ned. "Imagine an ice boat flying across that glacier at about the rate of an express train, which we shall do if we get some wind. By gracious, I wish we were there now!"

"We shall be, old man, before we strike that glacier," said Dick, "if we don't get along. Have you noticed we haven't moved a yard the last fifteen minutes?"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, but that's true!" cried the Unknown, glancing towards the shore.

"There's a sort of eddy here," said Ned. "This seems to fix us in one spot."

"I know what we can do," exclaimed Dick; "we'll push the raft along; we have a pole."

"Let's try it, anyway."

This plan was not successful. The reason was that the water was much deeper than they had expected to find it, and so the pole would not reach to the bottom.

"What's to be done?" asked Dick.

"We must tow the raft," answered Ned.

The Unknown whistled.

"Phew!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to walk along the bank dragging the raft after you? I don't like that."

"It won't be very hard work. It will float easy enough."

"Try it, try it, by all means," answered the Unknown, briskly. "I'll sit on the raft and steer it. You must have some one here to keep it clear of the bank. That's a fair division of labor."

"I have a better plan than that," said Edith. "Why not hoist the sail of our ice boat? That would take us along."

"Famous!" cried Ned. "That's the idea."

"Great! How strange we never thought of that," remarked Dick.

To run up the sail was an easy matter. In a few minutes the great three-cornered sheet of canvas was spread out so as to take the wind.

For awhile the craft lay becalmed on the water. Not a breath of air ruffled the surface of the creek, but it was not long before distant waves at the rear showed that a breeze was approaching, for the sail filled and the raft began to move through the water.

"Hurrah! now we're off!" shouted Dick.

"Great Scott!" cried the Unknown. "Too much off. The wind's carrying the ice boat off the raft. In a minute we shall all be in the water."

"Down with the sail!" shouted Ned, jumping up

and running toward the mast. "Give me a hand here. Quick!"

Almost instantly the great sail was lowered, coming down so quickly, that the spar narrowly escaped hurting some one.

"Another moment," said Dick, "and we should have been overboard, and have lost all our stores, and perhaps our ice boat into the bargain."

"Our own fault," said Ned. "I thought the weight of the stores and of ourselves would have been enough to keep the ice boat steady. That's where I was wrong, but we can easily put things straight. It's only necessary to lash the ice boat to the raft with some stout cords."

After this was done progress was rapid. The wind continued to blow steadily at the stern, so keeping the sail out, it caught the breeze and took the craft along.

The journey to Valdes Bay was made well under all the circumstances, and it was not quite noon when the log hut was sighted.

By the time the ice boat was off the water, and the various goods it carried had been stored away it was nearly dark, so it was decided that the night should be passed in the log hut, and that an early start should be made the next morning.

Whilst Edith was preparing a good supper, Ned, Dick and the Unknown were busy loading the ice boat with the stores it was intended to carry with them.

"We'll do everything to-night," said Ned, "so that we can start to-morrow morning directly we've had breakfast."

After supper Ned played the banjo and Edith sang. Quite a pleasant time was spent before they all retired for the night.

"That's the last breakfast you'll cook for us for some time, Edith," said Ned, as they gathered around the table next morning.

Edith stared at him in surprise.

"Why, you never thought you were going with us, did you?" asked Dick. "You didn't suppose we should take you to such an awful place as the Valdes glacier is said to be?"

"I didn't waste any time thinking about it, boys, and I'm not doing any thinking now," replied Edith. "I've been everywhere with you before, and I'm going now. That's enough."

Edith took her rifle and left the hut.

"Guess if she says she'll go, she will," muttered Ned.

"There's not much doubt about that, dear boy," remarked the Unknown. "So I advise you to waste no more time in talk. You ought not to have sprung out on Edith so suddenly as you did."

The party had harnessed stout ropes to the ice boat.

With these it was intended to drag it up the steep ascent.

Their way lay toward a narrow pass in the mountains, about three miles from the hut.

"Have we to go up there?" asked Dick, pointing toward the mountain that lay right ahead.

"It must be so," answered the Unknown. "There's

no other peak near Valdes Bay. As I understand it that is our road."

"Then off we go," shouted Ned. "You take hold of this rope with me, Zed. Dick can take the other."

"And I will help him," cried Edith.

"No, no, Edith. We don't need your help."

"But you'll have it all the same," said the girl, grasping the rope. "I'll take my share of the work so long as I can."

They reached the foot of the pass without difficulty.

For the first mile or two the ascent was very gradual, and the surface of the snow being frozen hard the ice boat glided readily along.

After this all was changed, for so steep did the ascent become that at times it seemed as if it would be impossible to proceed. It was only by the greatest exertion they were able to drag the ice boat along.

Once it sank through the snow and had to be dug out, which took up a lot of time.

"In half an hour it will be dark!" cried Dick. "What shall we do?"

"Take no notice of the darkness," answered Ned. "We'll go right ahead."

"Dear boy, I differ with you," said the Unknown. "In the darkness the whole lot of us stand a very good chance of falling into a crevasse, one thousand feet deep. Now, as I know my man isn't at the bottom I, for one, won't take the risk."

"Then you expect us to stay here all night, Zed?"

"Sure. There's some hemlock trees growing way over there. We can cut some branches and make a good shelter. Travel by night when you must, Ned, but not unless. Look!" cried the Unknown pointing ahead to a great fissure in the rock. "Where should we have been, if it had been dark?"

Ned saw the force of the Unknown's argument.

Taking their axes the boys climbed up to the hemlocks, and lopping off a quantity of branches, they threw them down to the Unknown who carried them to the boat. With the aid of some uprights sunk in the snow, a very fair shelter was made, and as there seemed no prospect of a storm they looked forward to the night without uneasiness.

Daylight found them on their way again, the weather still being fine. Hour after hour they toiled up the slope, and when darkness came Ned insisted that they should proceed.

"We have a lantern," he said. "We can't camp here."

"Yes," cried Edith. "And I will carry it. I can go on ahead, and if there is a crevasse I shall warn you."

This precaution turned out to be unnecessary. Indeed, the route improved somewhat, which was very welcome, for the two boys and the Unknown were almost worn out.

"A light!" cried Dick, suddenly, after they had been traveling thus for some time.

"It's the lantern Edith's carrying," said Ned.

"No, no. It's further away, Ned."

"Hello! hello!" cried the Unknown.

"Who the mischief are ye?" answered a voice.

"Good!" exclaimed the Unknown. "That clears the situation. Thought it might be Indians."

They found it was a party of three men camped under a shelter made of hemlock boughs.

They sprang up, brought out a lantern and gazed in amazement at Young Klondike and his party.

"Thunder! what have ye there, young feller?" cried one man, staring hard at the ice boat. "A flying machine?"

"No, an ice boat. I'm going to cross the Valdes glacier on it," answered Ned.

"By gosh! you're at the edge of the glacier now. You'll see that soon as it's light. Me and my partners here didn't like the look of it, so we reckoned we'd turn back."

"Did you want to cross it?" inquired Ned.

"Sure. That's why we're here. We came from Tanana, thinking we'd strike Copper River Valley. No such luck. Say, I'm an old hand in these parts; bear trapping about Alaska most all my life, but this blamed glacier beats me. I don't want any of it."

After a consultation it was decided to halt and build the best shelter they could; fortunately there were plenty of hemlocks near.

Ned and his friends made themselves as comfortable as they could till morning, and as soon as it was daylight they saw the great glacier before them.

It glowed like a mirror beneath the sunlight. On each side of this great sheet of ice towered huge peaks covered with snow.

As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but ice and snow to be seen; no trees, no vegetation, not a living thing.

"Just as you described it, Zed," said Dick. "It looks terrible, but it's a fine sight all the same."

The three strangers were looking on, too.

"Gentlemen," said Ned, "I'm going to start across the glacier in a few minutes. If you like to pay the price, you can go along, too. The ice boat's big enough to carry the whole crowd."

"You mean it, boss? You'll take passengers?"

"Sure! This is my Ice Boat Express, brought here to carry passengers and freight. Ten dollars a passenger is my rate, and ten cents a pound for freight."

"Ten cents a pound!" cried one of the men. "Mighty steep that, mister."

"If you don't like to pay it stay here, or pack your own goods across," answered Ned, dryly. "I'm out for business every time."

"You shut up, Jim!" exclaimed the old miner who had previously done all the talking. "It's a square deal and cheap as dirt."

"I know that," replied Ned, calmly. "That's why what your friend said made me somewhat angry. You can't pack goods across the Chilkoot or any other place less than twenty-eight cents a pound, and I'm only asking about a third, and get you over, too, in

quarter the time. If it's a deal, put your packs aboard, for we start right now."

When the seven people and all the freight were on the ice boat there was still an abundance of room. This was satisfactory. The next question was would the weight be too great for the carrying power of the sail?

"If it doesn't go to-day, it never will!" cried Dick, "for there's a grand wind blowing."

Up went the sail. The breeze filled it in a moment.

"She moves!" cried Ned. "I can feel it."

"Moves! Ye gods and little fishes!" shouted the Unknown, a moment later. "She flies!"

So far as speed was concerned the ice boat was a success.

It traveled along the smooth surface of the glacier at a terrific gate, stopping for nothing.

The surface of the glacier at times resembled a rolling prairie, and up and down the hollows, frozen something like the waves of the sea, the ice boat fairly flew.

Ned and Dick were wild with delight. Even the Unknown seemed to be enjoying himself. Edith shouted gayly each time the boat took a flying leap over one of the ice mounds.

"This is the sort of switchback for me," she said. "I'd like to live on this boat."

"Port your helm, Ned!" shouted the Unknown, "or you'll run us into that great block of ice ahead."

Ned was steering. Round went the tiller, and the boat answered at once. Past the obstacle it flashed, moving furiously.

The mast was cracking and straining under the force of the wind. All eyes were fixed on it, fearing it would break. But the wood was stout and it only bent.

"Copper Centre!" cried the old miner, standing up and pointing to a log cabin settlement ahead.

"That's the Klutena river you see. In a minute we'll be off the glacier."

In Copper Centre the excitement was great when they saw the ice boat come in.

Men left off work, others hearing the cries, ran out of their huts, and as the edge of the glacier was reached, a terrific cheer in the town welcomed the arrival of Young Klondike's Ice Boat Express.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### FINDING THE WONDERFUL CAVE.

THE crowd had collected around Jim Casey's hut.

Casey kept a kind of saloon, and he himself was the first to speak to Ned, when the latter and his companions entered the town.

He asked Ned who he was, and when he heard the name he knew it was Young Klondike who stood before him. He had often heard of him, and was quite aware that Ned was a millionaire.

"Thunder," said Casey. "It's not in the Klondike I'd be if I had your pile, young feller. Ice yachting's a fine enough sport in its way, but a little of it would do for me."

"It's not sport with me, but business," replied Ned.

"Business!"

"You bet it is. I'm not running an Ice Boat Express for my health. I'm here to run to and fro across the glacier carrying freight and passengers. It's easy enough. You see those three men? Well, I brought them and their packs safely over, and what's to prevent me bringing others?"

Casey was delighted.

He saw a golden vision before him. Young Klondike's Ice Boat Express would be the means of establishing a regular trade route from Valdes Bay to the Copper River Valley, and no one would reap more benefit from this than Casey himself.

"Walk right in, Young Klondike," he said. "This is my shanty, and all that's inside belongs to you and your friends. You own the place while you're here. Come, boys, step lively; the door's open."

There was a very noisy crowd in the saloon, so Ned, Dick and Edith were glad to avail themselves of a room which Casey showed them.

"But where's Zed?" cried Dick, suddenly.

"Zed? I thought he was with us. He walked down from the ice boat with us. Wonder where he can be? I was going to say we'd better have dinner," continued Ned, "but I don't want to begin without the Unknown."

"I saw him last talking to that old miner we brought across the glacier," said Edith.

"Then he can't be far away. I'll find him."

Ned came back in about ten minutes, but the Unknown was not with him.

"Couldn't see him anywhere. However," he added, "he's sure to turn up before long. I'm not worrying myself about him."

Whilst they were eating, Dick spoke about the future.

"This ice boat business may be great fun," he said, "but I don't see much profit in it."

"We made eighty dollars on this trip anyway, Dick," answered Ned. "Three passengers at ten dollars each and five hundred pounds of freight."

"Eighty dollars!" repeated Dick. "That's poor work. Why, Ned, we won't be able to sail our boat perhaps more than two or three times a week. That's small business for Golden & Luckey, isn't it? We ought to be out looking for gold. There must be plenty of it here."

"What, on a glacier?"

"No, but in Copper River Valley there's good claims to be had."

"Well, let us put in a few weeks with our boat, Dick. We shall have all the winter before us for prospecting."

Casey came in at this moment.

"Young Klondike," he said, "a word with you."

"Say it," answered Ned.

"What time does your boat sail to-morrow?"

"Why?"

"'Cause there's a lot of fellers what wants to go with you. Enough for two loads I reckon."

"You can't have all you want in this world," said a voice. "Your friends will have to wait, Casey."

"Zed!" cried Dick, surprised at the Unknown's sudden entrance.

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"When our friend Casey has left us," answered the Unknown, "matters can be explained."

Casey took this as a pretty straight hint to clear out, so giving the Unknown an angry look, he left without making any more remarks.

As soon as he had gone the Unknown opened the door and called to some one who had been waiting outside. It was the old miner who had crossed on the ice boat.

"This is Ben Daniels," said the Unknown, introducing him with a wave of the hand. "I've had a very pleasant talk with him and I want you to hear it, Ned. I tell you it's mighty interesting."

"Yes. Ben Daniels is my name," said the old miner, "and there's no one in the Klondike can say a word against it. Boss, you're blamed rich, I know, but I can make you richer."

The boys looked at him in surprise, but nothing was said and he went on.

"It's like this. I came up these parts to get gold I'd heard tell about, and not far from here, either."

"In Copper Valley?" asked Ned.

"No. On the glacier."

"Gold on the glacier? Nonsense, man!"

"Not in the ice, boss. But there's a big cave in one of the peaks on the north side. All we've got to do is to find it, and that's dead easy. I wouldn't let on to those fellers I was with, but I trust you, mister."

"This is a strange story," said Ned. "I expect if we go we shall have all our trouble for nothing."

"Not likely. When my pardner Jim Norwood was dying at Litka he told me 'bout it. And, say, Jim wasn't the chap to dream, neither. His head was level. What Jim says goes."

"There can't be any harm in searching for the cave," said Dick. "Even if we don't find it, we shan't have wasted much time."

"No harm at all. We'll go," answered Ned.

"Hush!" said the Unknown, putting his finger on his lips in a very mysterious manner. "We shall have to be careful, Ned. There are a lot of men in this camp who want to cross the glacier, and if we attempt to go away without them we may have to fight for our boat."

"There's an easy way to get over that difficulty," said Ned.

"How?"

"Wait till it's dark, Zed. Then we can drop out of this window. Our ice boat is upon the glacier with all the stores aboard. Once there, no one can stop us."

"Daniels had better meet us there, say in an hour," observed the Unknown. "It may cause suspicion if he's shut up here too long with us."

"I'll be on time, boss," said Daniels, as he left the room.

"You seem anxious to go, Zed," exclaimed Dick, "and yet I'm sure you don't think much of our chances."

"It's rainbow gold we're after, Dick, but I'd rather be chasing that than do nothing."

To leave Casey's turned out an easy matter. Casey and his friends were all drinking, so whatever noise Ned and his friends made was lost amid the din that arose in the front of the house.

Outside they met a man with a lantern.

He recognized Young Klondike immediately, having seen him at Casey's.

"Hurry on!" cried Ned. "We've no time to talk now."

This haste seemed to confirm the man's suspicions.

"You're shaking us, mister!" he exclaimed. "Say, that won't do. Hello! Jim! Joe! Boys! Hello! The ice boat is going to start!"

The man's shouts, given in a fog horn voice, brought the crowd out of Casey's, and a wave of his lantern led everybody to where he was standing.

Ned and the rest were already on the run, moving over the snow as fast as possible. At their heels were fully twenty people.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, they're shooting!" cried the Unknown. "I'll have a hand in that game," he added, whipping out his revolver.

"Skip! Zed, skip!" shouted Ned. "They can't hit us. It's waste of time to reply to their shots."

Bang! Bang!

A perfect volley was fired, but it was so dark that all the shooting was done at random, and none of the bullets did any harm.

"I'm here, boss," cried a voice.

"Ben Daniels! Then we're at the boat!" exclaimed Ned. "All aboard! That's right! Up with the sail. There's not a moment to lose."

Daniels had the sail partly raised before the others arrived, so it did not take a minute to hoist it right up.

The breeze caught the canvas, and away they flew, the angry shouts that had followed their flight soon dying away in the distance.

"Where are we going?" asked Dick; "we can't find the cave in this darkness."

"We shall pass it if we go on," said Edith.

"Therefore, we won't go on," observed Ned. "When we've run across the ice for about five minutes, we'll lower the sails and make everything snug for the night."

This was soon done and the boat brought to a stop.

Covering themselves up with bearskins, and keeping every part of their bodies away from the cold, they slept on their ice boat till morning comfortably enough.

The northern boundary of the glacier was then seen to be about a mile away. It was a range of high mountains, rising in some places perpendicularly from the ice, not less than one thousand feet.

The wind was not favorable for sailing directly to this boundary, but by tacking it was eventually reached.

Then the search for the wonderful cave began.

Ben Daniels was the only person on the boat who thought of finding it. The others supposed it only to exist in the imagination of the dead Jim Norwood, Ben's friend, but after a short search along the foot of the cliffs Ben stopped.

"The cave, the cave!" he shouted. "By gosh, I knew Jim wasn't a dreamer. Here it is!"

"Yes, that's a cave right enough," said Ned, "and a mighty big one, too!"

"Big enough to take the ice boat."

"Yes, Zed. Come," cried Ned, springing on to the ice. "We'll drag it over there. It's quicker work now than sailing would be."

The ice boat, mast and all, entered the cave easily enough, and the sail was left standing, there being no reason to lower it.

All were hungry, but no one thought of eating.

They were all so eager to explore this wonderful cave.

Lanterns were lighted, and the gleam they gave was sufficient to show the way, but not enough to light up the roof. Thus, they calculated that the cavern was of a great height.

It was certainly of great extent. They had gone already fully two hundred yards and had not reached the end.

"We'll never strike gold here," cried Ned, "never in the world."

"Mister," said Daniels, "I know more than I said. Guess I'll speak right out now. The gold is one hundred paces from the mouth of the cave. Jim said so, and you bet he knew."

They measured off the distance, and decided to set to work as soon as they had breakfasted, for they had had nothing since the previous night.

"A good thing we brought wood with us," said Dick, as he helped to carry logs from the ice boat.

They built a huge fire over the spot where they intended to dig, in order to thaw out the ground.

The temperature in the cave was much higher than it was outside, and so they were in hopes that the ground would be less hard to work than usual. And they were not disappointed in this.

After they had dug down a depth of three feet the ground began to soften perceptibly. This was something they had never met with before.

They worked until they were so tired they could not lift their picks, and when they lay down to rest they were asleep in a moment. A few hours later they were busy again.

Rapidly, considering the nature of the work, the shaft deepened.

Dick was sending up bucketfuls of dirt, and on the second day, after their arrival at the cave, they struck the black sand where the gold ought to be.

"Keep up that fire, Edith," cried the Unknown.

"I'll be back in a minute," and he hurried out of the cave.

"There ought to be gold in that," exclaimed Dick, as Ned hauled up a bucket filled with black sand. "Wash it, and see how it pans out."

"Wish the Unknown would lend a hand," said Ned.

"So he will, dear boy," answered the Unknown, appearing out of the gloom. "I'm on this scene, and I've brought something with me. Look! I've just cut this great block of ice, Ned. You'll have to boil it down to get water to do the washing with."

The dirt was dumped into the rocker. Daniels was more anxious than anyone to find out how much gold it contained. He was too impatient to wait until the ice was melted.

"Haul away, Ned!" cried Dick, just as Daniels threw the water into the rocker.

"You don't need to wait for washing," said Edith. "Look, the sand's filled with small nuggets."

"And flake gold, too," added the Unknown. "This is a good strike."

Meanwhile Daniels, who was staring into the rocker, was speechless with amazement.

"I'm an old miner," he gasped at length, "but this beats me, boss. How much gold should you say there might be in that pan, mister?"

"By gracious, it's rich and no mistake!" exclaimed Ned. "There must be over one hundred dollars' worth."

"There's three hundred if there's one," shouted Daniels, wild with excitement. "Jim, old pard, you made no mistake when you talked to your mate 'bout this cave."

Everybody was hard at work now. The Unknown cut the ice, Edith melted it, and Ned, Dick and Daniels worked in the shaft and washed the dirt.

In two days they had taken twelve hundred dollars' worth of gold out of the shaft.

Then they cut drifts in several directions, and working on continuously, at the end of one week they had brought up seventy thousand dollars' worth of gold.

"If there's better business in the world than this," said the Unknown, "I want to know where it is."

"And it gets richer all the time," cried Ned.

"What shall we do with the gold?" inquired Dick.

"Put it on the ice boat, mister," suggested Daniels, "so that any time we want to skip, all's ready."

"But we don't want to go yet."

"Great Heavens! no," cried Ned, "or if you do, you'll leave me behind."

"And me, too, you bet."

Whilst Dick and Ned were cutting another drift, Daniels busied himself in carrying the gold from the mouth of the shaft, where it was lying, to the ice boat.

Edith was preparing a meal. The Unknown was hauling up the dirt from the shaft.

All at once a fearful scream was heard coming from the mouth of the cave. The Unknown started, dropped the bucket almost on Dick's head. Then he set off

towards the entrance to the cavern, followed by Ned and Dick, who had made their way out of the shaft.

They could hear the voices of several men, and a noise as if some heavy object was being dragged along.

Out on the ice something large and white rose up into the darkness.

"Great Heavens!" cried Ned, astounded at what he saw. "It's the Ice Boat Express!"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIGHT FOR THE ICE BOAT EXPRESS.

NED, Dick and the Unknown had whipped out their revolvers instantly.

"Bring back that boat!" shouted Ned. "There's going to be trouble if you don't."

A burst of defiant laughter came from the ice boat.

"Ha, ha, Young Klondike!" cried a voice, "this boat is now mine. Take it if you can!"

Ned and his two companions began to shoot. Prompt measures were absolutely necessary if the boat was to be saved from the gang who were going off with it.

Bang! Bang!

Shot after shot was fired, but it did not appear that any harm was done. It was too dark to see the outlines of the men with the boat. The white sail was all that was visible, and that not very distinctly.

"Let's chase them!" cried Dick. "They've not got the boat moving yet. We may be in time to save it."

"Dick's advice is good," said the Unknown. "The nearer we get the more chance we shall have of getting the best of these thieves."

Running across the ice was not very easy, and they made but slow progress. However, they did advance, and the ice boat was still in the same place. It was evident, from the words they heard, that those on board the boat had found some difficulty in managing it.

"Out with you!" cried a voice that seemed familiar to Ned. "Jump on the ice and turn the head of the boat round. Then we shall get the wind."

"They're stranded!" shouted Ned. "Quick! Quick! We shall have them now!"

"Not on your life!" came the quick reply from the boat.

The boys fired.

The men in the boat immediately returned fire. They blazed away furiously, but Ned and his companions did not stop to shoot, for they wanted to get to close quarters with the enemy. A few yards more, and they would be near enough to fire with effect.

"They're off!" cried the Unknown. "Look! I can see the sail moving and hear the cutters grinding the ice."

"Good-by, Young Klondike!" cried a voice from the boat. "You'll have to tramp now, same as we had."

Ned fired and so did Dick and the Unknown, but the

shots were sent at random and had no effect in stopping the boat.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" cried the Unknown. "But we are getting it in the neck now. Our boat gone and our gold, too."

"And that's not the worst!" exclaimed Dick. "All our stores were on board as well."

Ned gave a shout.

"We shall have that boat yet," he cried. "Look! it's coming right round now. They can't sail it, that's what's the matter, and they've run right up into the wind."

What Ned said was true enough, for the ice boat had executed a semicircle and was actually coming back towards the boys, slowing down gradually as it did so.

Ned rushed towards it, followed by the other two.

"Surrender!" he cried, leveling his revolver at the men on the boat. "If you don't I'll shoot you!"

Instantly two men sprang from the boat and dashed along across the ice.

"Cowards!" roared a savage voice. "By gosh, we might have held out against them if you'd had any sand in you."

"Do you surrender!" asked Ned, still covering the solitary man on the boat.

"The game's up. You play the strongest hand, Young Klondike. Reckon you have me this time."

"We'll have those other two fellows!" cried Dick.

"Let them go!" exclaimed Ned. "It's not worth while to trouble about them."

"Thought I knew you," said the Unknown, taking a good look at the prisoner. "Ned, this is an old friend of ours, Hiram Hart, the man we met at Caribou creek."

"The man to whom I gave five hundred dollars!" exclaimed Ned. "You have a fine idea of gratitude, Mr. Hart, I must say!"

"You stole my scheme, mister," answered Hart, defiantly. "You'd never have thought of the Ice Boat Express if it hadn't been for me."

"I gave you money to build another," replied Ned, "and you squandered it all. Then I took the matter in hand myself. I gave you one chance, and I don't intend to give you another. Get up and go!"

"Go!" echoed Hart.

"Skip is the word," said the Unknown. "We find we can get on very well without you."

"You don't mean to say you're going to turn a feller creature off like this, no food, no drink, and a long tramp before him on this infernal glacier."

"That's exactly what you wished us to go through," answered Ned. "Now, be off, or you'll get hurt. I'll shoot if you don't travel."

Hart saw by Ned's face that there was no hope for him, so growling like a bear, he stepped off the boat on to the ice, and slunk away in the darkness.

"Great Heavens!" cried Ned, as soon as he was gone, "I'm sorry I let him escape so easily."

"We're better rid of him," said Dick.

"Yes, but supposing poor old Daniels is dead.

Don't you think Hart ought to pay for it. We must hurry back to the cave and see what has happened. Everybody lend a hand, and we can drag the boat easily."

When they arrived at the cavern they found Daniels lying on some bearskins near the fire, with Edith bending over him.

"How is he, Edith?" inquired Ned, anxiously.

"I'm pretty right, boss," Daniels replied quickly, before the girl could speak. "Those cusses hit me a smart crack on the head, though. Lucky they didn't shoot, or I'd be a dead man now. Say, we've lost our boat and our gold and food, but there's heaps more gold in this cave."

"The ice boat's there," said Ned, pointing to the entrance to the cavern. "We had a close call of losing it, but somehow we didn't."

Daniels had received an ugly blow on the head which had rendered him unconscious for a time, but thanks to Edith, he soon recovered. She bathed his wound and bandaged it, and it seemed as if he would soon be well again.

Till daylight a watch was kept. Ned, the Unknown and Dick took turns at standing sentry, because it was just possible that Hart and his gang might return and cause trouble. All was quiet during the night, but in the morning quite a crowd of people were seen coming across the ice towards the cave. Ned knew at once that they came from Copper Centre, because amongst them he recognized Jim Casey.

"You're Young Klondike, I'm told," said one of the crowd, when he was near enough to speak.

"That is what I am called," answered Ned.

"I'm chief of the vigilance committee of Copper Centre, mister, and my name is Burton, Phil Burton. I want to have a talk with you. We're in a heap of trouble in Copper Centre, and, boss, you're the cause of it."

"I?" cried Ned, in surprise.

"Yes, you and your Ice Boat Express. It's like this," Burton went on. "Everybody up the Copper River Valley's heard of your boat. It got about that you were up here with it to run people over the Valdes glacier. What's the consequence? Mighty unpleasant for decent citizens, let me tell you. All the gamblers, claim jumpers and all-round toughs in the valley have collected at Copper Centre for you to take them over the ice."

"But I'm not running an express for that class of people," replied Ned. "I shouldn't get a cent out of one of them, and this is a matter of business with me, Mr. Burton."

"I put it to you on public grounds, Young Klondike. In the interest of law and order, you ought to oblige us. I know you've done a good deal for other towns when they've asked you. Won't you help us?"

"How many are there?" inquired Ned.

"'Bout fifty, and not all toughs, mind. There's some respectable citizens amongst them, too, who

want to get way down to the coast before the winter sets in. You'd better make up your mind and come back to the town."

"Very well, I will," said Ned, after a few moments' thought. "I think I ought to help you out of this trouble and I will."

"What did I tell you, Casey?" cried Burton, turning to the saloon keeper. "I said Young Klondike was white, and by gosh! he is, too. When shall you be along?"

"Can't say exactly when," answered Ned. "Maybe to-day. Anyway, it will be soon. Oh! one moment before you go. How did you know we were in this cave?"

"Some toughs who reached the town to-day told us so."

"A man named Hart with them?" inquired Ned.

"Yes, we left him in Copper Centre."

"Well, good-day, gentlemen, you'll see me shortly."

The citizens went away in a good temper, for they were delighted at the prospect of being rid of the turbulent element that had lately crowded into it.

"It will take some weeks," said Dick, as soon as he and his friends were alone, "to carry that crowd over the ice."

"What if it does?"

"Why, Ned, it means that we shall have to give up mining here."

"I think it will be best to do so. We've located the gold. Let the working of it wait till the spring. Then we can put a gang on to work it. In the winter it would be a hard job to feed them and keep them alive. Don't you think so, Zed?"

"I'm with you, Ned," replied the Unknown. "Besides, I think we ought to fire that crowd of toughs out of the town."

"By gosh!" said old Daniels, "all I want is to get my hands on that man Hart. He's the cuss that hit me over the head. I know that because I heard one of the gang call him that—and gee whiz, I'll get square with him! How the mischief he knew me in here is more'n I can make out."

"I can't understand it, either," said Ned. "He very soon recovered from that blow he got at Tanana, anyway."

"I think," observed Edith, "that when we were talking about this cave with Ben Daniels at Casey's some one must have overheard us. Hart must have arrived at Copper Centre inquiring for the ice boat, and have met with the people who listened to our talk. Perhaps he knew them before."

"Edith, I declare you have the best head of any of us," exclaimed Dick. "Don't you think so, Zed?"

"I'm tired of saying so," answered the Unknown. "There's nothing to keep us here any longer, is there, Ned?"

"Nothing. We must decide what to do with the gold, though. A share of it belongs to Daniels, which he can have if he likes and dispose of in any way that suits him."

"Boss, I'll leave my pile with you. When I want it I'll let you know."

"Let's take the gold with us into Copper Centre," said Dick.

"Better not," the Unknown remarked. "There's no bank there, or any other safe place."

"Then we'll carry it on the boat!" cried Dick.

"Won't it be very heavy," inquired Edith. "I should think it would interfere with our sailing?"

"I believe it would, Edith," said Ned. "Suppose we leave it in this cave, at any rate for the present. It will be easy enough to find a hiding place for it. We can bury it in the ground, and no one but one of us will know where to look for it."

Ned's plan was at once adopted, because it seemed to be the most sensible course to pursue. The gold was put in a hole several feet deep, in a place where no one was likely to seek for it.

The Ice Boat Express soon landed the party in Copper Centre, where they were warmly welcomed by the citizens.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LEAP FOR LIFE.

YOUNG KLONDIKE was instantly surrounded by a crowd of people, who all wanted to make the first trip on the ice boat.

These were the respectable citizens who were anxious to quit Copper Centre, as the winter would soon be upon them.

The tough element was in no such hurry.

Whilst Ned was conferring with the vigilance committee as to how the matter should be arranged, Daniels went around with his gun looking for Hart. He could not find him anywhere, and it would have been well if he had stayed quietly at the hotel.

The exertion caused a relapse, and the result was that Daniels was put to bed in a semiconscious state, suffering from the effects of the blow on the head.

The upshot of Ned's talk with the vigilance committee was that it was decided to get rid of the tough element first.

"Let's run them out of the town like greased lightning," said Phil Burton, "the others can wait."

Three successful runs were made across the glacier with the Ice Boat Express, and this made such a sensible impression on the tough element, that the town began to breathe more freely, and the labors of the vigilance committee were materially lightened.

The trip across, and the return journey occupied a day, and each night when the party returned they went always to see how Ben Daniels was, for they all liked the sturdy old miner. Ben was getting along well, but most of the day he had to keep his bed.

The third evening he said he had something important to tell them.

"It's like this, boss," said Daniels; "I just managed to crawl down to the bar to-day, and I'm blamed glad I did. There's a game going on. Some of the crowd are wondering where our gold is. 'Cause Hart and his gang knew we had some."

"Did you hear this?" asked Ned.

"Heard some fellers talking, but my ears wasn't sharp enough to catch all they said. Anyway, they're after our gold, which they reckon is in the cave hidden away somewhere. There's a gang going off in a few days to look for it."

"Do you know the men?" asked Dick.

"Never set eyes on 'em before. What's to be done, boss?"

"The gold must be removed," answered Ned. "That's sure. What to do with it is puzzling me. Now, Zed, here's a chance for you to make your mark. Give us your opinion."

"Dear boy, my advice is to land the gang on the other side of the glacier. Once there, I shan't be much afraid of their working their way back to the cave."

"But the trouble is to know them, Zed. How can we make sure that we have them all?"

"Right, Ned, right!" cried the Unknown. "Some one else have a say now. Dick's been doing a lot of thinking, for I've had my eye on him."

"I think," said Dick, "we ought to move the gold away from the cave gradually. It's a heavy load, perhaps too heavy for the ice boat to carry all at once. Say we take a third each time."

"But how shall we carry it?" cried Edith, "and what are we to do with it?"

"We can carry it in a bag, lash it underneath the ice boat, in fact," answered Dick. "We have the material, for we brought away a lot of canvas from Tanana in case anything happened to our sail."

"Your plan's all right, Dick," cried Ned, "and as for disposing of the gold why that's easy. We'll send a message down to Juneau, asking our bankers there to arrange for the transportation. They'll send right up."

"So that's settled, boss," said Daniels. "Now I'll sleep easy, for I was worried and no mistake. Didn't like our gold going into the pockets of a lot of toughs."

The rest of the evening was spent in making a strong canvas bag to hold the gold. It was formed with material of double thickness, and sewed up very strongly.

It was no use taking the gold from the cave yet, because the agent from Juneau would not have arrived at the other side of the glacier.

Some days later, however, Ned thought it might be safe to do so. Accordingly, on a return trip across the glacier to Copper Centre, the ice boat was sailed across the valley to the cave, having no one on board but Ned and his friends, and carrying a large quantity of wood.

The use to which this was to be put was soon seen. The soil that covered the gold had already hardened, and it was necessary to thaw it out; so a big fire was built over the spot, and they had nothing to do but wait patiently till it had burned itself out.

To get the gold out now was an easy task, and in a very short time the bag was filled, securely

fastened, and lashed tightly underneath the boards of the express. This done, they sailed back to the town.

Next day some respectable citizens were to be carried across the glacier, but among the crowd waiting to go were Hart and a friend of his, a particularly tough specimen, known as Indian Jack.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the Unknown, "where did you spring from? Thought we'd lost you. What's your game now?"

"I'm going to move, so's Indian Jack," answered Hart. "They don't like us here."

"Like you!" exclaimed Phil Burton, the chief of the vigilance committee. "You bet your life we don't! If you're here after to day, it's on the nearest tree you both swing. I'm not talking through my hat. What I say goes, and I give you fair warning, mind."

"There's a friend of ours, Hart, gunning for you," said Dick.

"Daniels, you mean," Hart remarked. "I know where he is; he's in bed. Guess if he knew I was here he'd crawl round, though, so, Young Klondike, if you don't want trouble you'd better start."

Ned was too disgusted with Hart to speak to him. He had done what he could for the man who had repaid him with the basest kind of ingratitude. Still, he was better away, so Young Klondike made no objection to his going.

Once more the run across the glacier was a success. Hart's eyes gleamed viciously when he saw Ned collecting the money that the respectable citizens paid for the voyage.

Doubtless he was regretting that the Ice Boat Express did not belong to him.

As soon as the express arrived, a man came out from a shelter formed of hemlock boughs laid against a cross bar, and advanced to meet Ned.

"You are Young Klondike, I believe," he said.

"Yes. And who are you?"

"I was sent here from Juneau in reply to your message. I came from the bank there, and you will see from this letter I give you that I am what I claim to be."

"That seems to be all right, Dick, doesn't it?" said Ned, passing the note to Dick after he had read it.

"Yes. I recognize the cashier's writing."

"Have you an escort with you?" asked Ned.

"I have three men besides myself, all well armed. Your gold will be quite safe with me. I intend to place it on board a vessel in Valdes Bay and will come back for the rest. When shall you be here with some more?"

"To-morrow," said Ned. "I will bring a parcel similar to this."

The agent gave Ned a receipt for the money—about twenty-five thousand dollars—in due form, which Ned carefully put in his pocket. In all matters of business the boy was very exact.

"Come, come," said Ned, "we must get back.

Recollect we have to go to the cave again. Why don't you come, Zed?"

"I was thinking, Ned," answered the Unknown, "our friend Hart's a pretty tough character, but he's a gentleman compared to Indian Jack. Suppose they should take it into their heads to hold up the agent and his escort."

"I only hope they will," laughed Ned. "In that case the world will get rid of two men of no account."

"Dear boy, that's a way of looking at it that didn't occur to me, but it's a mighty sensible one. Let us hope for the best."

"We shall fly back!" cried Edith. "What a wind there is. Ned, I've enjoyed these trips on the ice boat more than anything we've done since we came to the Klondike."

They stopped at the cave and got another bag of gold, not wasting a moment, for there were evident signs that a storm was approaching. Soon after they reached Copper Centre it burst in all its fury. There was not much snow, principally sleet and rain, but the wind blew with a violence that can scarcely be imagined.

"It's well we are where we are," said the Unknown. "If this storm continues we can't get across the glacier to-morrow, as we promised the agent."

"That won't make any difference," Ned remarked, "because it's certain he won't be waiting for us. In such fearful weather he would not dream of leaving Valdes Bay."

However, the weather next day was very different. The sun was not shining, but there was no rain, and the wind had gone down considerably. Ben Daniels was still too weak to travel, and as there were no passengers to be carried, Ned and his friends had the Ice Boat Express to themselves.

The journey proved long and tedious.

More than once the wind died right away, and then, of course, the ice boat stopped, for a boat can be becalmed on the ice as well as on the sea.

"Whistle for a breeze, Ned," cried the Unknown. "It looks as if we'll be here all night."

"No," exclaimed Ned, "not if we have to get out and drag it. If the wind doesn't come soon we'd better strike across the ice to the cave, because it's nearer than the town."

"Hurrah!" cried Dick; "the snow's blowing in clouds back there on the glacier. We shall get it in a minute or two. Hang on to the sheet, Zed! Here it comes!"

The boat traveled well the rest of the way, slowing down occasionally, but never quite stopping.

The agent was not on land as they hoped.

"I didn't expect he would be here," said Edith. "You recollect how long it took us to travel from Valdes Bay to this point? We didn't give him enough time; we should have allowed two days."

"He had enough time, Edith," Ned remarked. "It was last night's storm that delayed him. My!"

he added, as a head came out from under the hemlock shelter, "but here he is after all."

"Ye gods and little fishes!" shouted the Unknown, excitedly; "I'd know that face in a thousand. Hi Hart, by all that's wonderful."

Not only Hart, but his friend, Indian Jack, were under the shelter. Now they came crawling out, looking half frozen, as no doubt they were.

"So we can't lose you!" said Ned, sternly.

"It's not our fault this time, Young Klondike, I swear it's not!" cried Hart. "We've been here, me and Jack, ever since you left us yesterday."

"What! out in last night's storm?"

"You bet we were," replied Hart, shivering as he spoke.

"But you must be crazy! Why didn't you go on to Tanana with the others?" demanded Ned.

"Boss, we're not blamed fools. We didn't stay here 'cause we liked it, but 'cause we had to. The crowd you brought across yesterday was most all respectable citizens, so to say."

"Me and Hi was a bit off color," put in Indian Jack.

"Exactly! Jack's explained it. Well, boss, they wouldn't have us 'long with them, nohow, said they'd shoot us if we didn't skip."

"But you could have gone to Tanana by yourselves," said Ned. "Hart knows the route, anyway."

"That's just what we couldn't do," replied Hart. "They swore they'd hang us if we came within a mile of the town."

"You've brought all this on yourselves," said Dick.

"That's quite true, Dick," said Ned, drawing him to one side, where Edith and the Unknown joined them. "It's quite true, and really they don't deserve any pity. Still, after all they're human beings and we can't leave them here to starve. If we do, by to-morrow morning they'll be corpses."

"But what can we do with them?" asked Dick.

"Can't land them in Copper Centre again, that's certain," replied the Unknown. "The vigilance committee wouldn't stand for that."

"Then they must stay here!" cried Dick.

"That doesn't follow," answered Ned. "We will take them to the cave and leave them there."

"So that they can get the rest of the gold we've buried."

"That's in no danger," said Ned. "They have no tools to dig with, and if they had they couldn't thaw the earth without wood. Hart, supposing we land you at the cave, can you manage to take care of yourselves afterwards? You mustn't show up in Copper Centre, mind."

"We have friends in Copper Valley, on the river, Young Klondike. Give us enough food for two days, land us at the cave and we don't ask no more."

"Very well, it's a deal," cried Ned. "Jump aboard! We're off!"

"But the agent?" said Edith.

"He won't be here to-day. Round with the boat, that's right. You take the rudder, Dick," Ned con-

tinued. "I'll look after the sail. Right across the glacier first; it's a case of tacking, but we shall get there if the wind holds, and I think it will."

Hart and Indian Jack sat by themselves talking in a whisper and apparently having a good deal to say to each other, for they kept up an incessant conversation. As no one else had the slightest desire to talk to either of them they met with no interference.

The boat had not gone very far when Hart suddenly sprang to his feet and rushed at the Unknown, whom he grasped by the throat. At the same time Indian Jack sprang towards Ned.

"You have gold on this boat!" cried Hart, savagely. "Give it up or we'll kill the lot of you!"

Dick rushed to help the Unknown.

In doing so he let go the rudder, and at once the boat swung round, altering its course instantly and rushing headlong towards a frightful crevasse parallel to which they had been sailing.

Hart and Indian Jack saw the danger instantly and sprang off on the ice.

"Jump, Edith! Jump, Dick!" cried Young Klondike. "The ice boat is going into the gorge! Jump for your lives!"

Edith sprang off, landing on the ice safely, but Dick missed his footing and fell, while the Unknown went sprawling on his back, but Young Klondike still clung to the ice boat. Seizing the rudder he tried to turn it away from the crevasse.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A STARTLING SURPRISE AT THE CAVE.

DICK and his two friends turned round in time to see the ice boat fall into the crevasse, carrying Ned with it.

They were powerless to prevent this, and for a few moments they were so stunned by the fearful catastrophe that they remained perfectly still, staring at each other in dismay.

"Ned! Ned!" cried Edith, frantically. "Oh! Dick, we shall never see him again."

Dick made no reply, and he and the Unknown, both too overcome to speak, approached the crevasse. They went slowly as if dreading to look upon an awful spectacle—the mangled body of their companion.

"Hello!" came a cheerful voice, proceeding from the depths of the crevasse, "is everybody safe?"

"Ned!" cried Dick and the Unknown in one breath.

Instantly they rushed forward, Edith, recovering herself, going with them, and when they looked down into the abyss they saw an astonishing sight.

The ice boat had fallen not more than forty or fifty feet, and its further descent had been stopped.

It was wedged in between the two walls of the crevasse and lay in an almost horizontal position, with Ned standing upright upon it. So far as could be seen, the boat had suffered no injury.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah," cried the Unknown, "This beats the deck. Can't say I believed in mir-

acles before, but I do now. How goes it, Ned? All right down there?"

"Nothing the matter with me, feel rather lonesome, that's all," laughed Ned.

The others laughed, too, being glad to do so, for the strain of the last few minutes had been fearful.

"The question is," said Dick, "what is to be done next?"

"There's no question about that," cried Ned. "The first thing to do is to get me up on the glacier beside you."

"But how can we do it? We haven't any kind of a rope up here."

"I have plenty on the boat. I'll try and throw a coil up to you, so stand by to catch it."

The distance Ned had to throw the rope was not far, so at the very first attempt he made a successful cast, the Unknown catching it as soon as it came within reach.

Ned fastened it firmly around his body, and Dick, Edith and the Unknown slowly dragged him up.

As soon as he was on the glacier, they crowded round him, examining him with great curiosity, for they could not believe he was unhurt. Yet such was the case, and so far as could be seen there was not a scratch upon him.

"What became of the others?" asked Ned.

"What others?"

"Indian Jack and Hart. A good thing if they went headfirst into the crevasse."

"Ah! but they didn't," answered Dick. "Look across the glacier and you'll see the two scoundrels slinking away. There they go, Ned. Shall we give chase?"

"No. Let them skip. We are well rid of them, and I hope we'll never see them again. It's dead sure they won't want to run up against us after what happened on the ice boat to-day."

"Dear boy," said the Unknown, "excuse me differing with you so soon after your restoration to us, but I do hope we shall see them again, especially Hart. I want to settle accounts with him."

"Well, Zed, I won't stand in your way. Now we must get to work, for we have a heavy job before us. It won't be child's play getting that ice boat up here."

"We shall never do it, Ned," cried Edith. "We might as well not attempt it."

"But we must get it. What are we to do on this glacier without our ice boat? How are we going to move our gold from the cave? The boat can't fall any further and that's a consolation, and I don't think it's jammed so tight that it can't be moved."

"We'll try, Ned," said Dick, "but I reckon Edith's right. We've had our last run on the Ice Boat Express. What do you say, Zed?"

"Don't disturb him," laughed Edith. "He has his thinking cap on."

"He had, Edith," answered the Unknown, "but it's off now."

As the Unknown usually thought to good purpose they all listened eagerly to what he had to say.

"Something like this," said the Unknown, "happened to me when I was yachting on the Nile. The man at the helm went to sleep and the ship sailed right over a cataract, and——"

"The wind blew it back again," laughed Ned, interrupting him. "Yes, I know, it's quite a common occurrence in those parts."

"It's true, as sure as my name is Simon Salt," cried the Unknown.

"Hurry up, Zed!" exclaimed Dick. "You know we believe everything you say, but let us hear what connection there is between your wonderful yacht and our ice boat?"

"We hauled the yacht back, and she had a bigger drop than this boat, too," continued the Unknown. "How did we do it? Same way we're going to get our own craft out of the hole, I'm thinking. We couldn't pull her up if it wasn't for that rock"—he pointed to a high rock which rose out of the ice—"for we couldn't stand the strain. Now with the ropes twisted around that stone it's only a matter of time."

"Hooray! the Unknown's struck it this time!" cried Dick.

"Oh, don't follow my advice," said the Unknown. "I'm only a dreamer. I imagine things, I——"

"Shut up!" cried Ned. "Lend a hand here, Zed. You and Dick must lower me down."

"Going down again? For what, I'd like to know."

"Isn't it necessary for somebody to pass the rope round the boat? I'll go down and do it, and when I'm through you haul me up again, for we shall want the strength of all hands to raise the express. I'm ready, lower away."

Even Edith lent her assistance now, fearful that the strain upon the Unknown and Dick would be too great.

But this was proved not to be the case, for Ned relieved them of a good deal of his weight by placing his feet on the side of the gorge as he went down.

It was some time even now before work could actually begin on the boat. First of all, everything of a movable nature had to be drawn up, otherwise when the boat was being hauled to the surface, all portable articles would have fallen overboard, and have been lost in the crevasse.

Ned tried to get at the gold underneath the boat. He wanted to send this up, for it was very heavy, but he found it impossible to do so.

"Can't be helped," he cried. "We must do the best we can as it is. The ropes are fastened firm now, so haul me up, for I can do no more down here."

It was a tedious business getting the boat out of the crevasse, and an exhausting one, too. But for the expedient of passing the rope around the rock, as suggested by the Unknown, it would never have been done. Slowly but surely the work proceeded, until at last Young Klondike's Ice Boat Express was once more on the glacier, where it was greeted with a loud hurrah.

A close examination of it was now made, and the framework was seen to be in good condition. The mast had been loosened slightly, but the sail was intact. A few minutes' work made the mast as solid as it was before, and when all the other stores were put aboard, the express was quite as ready to sail as it had been before the accident.

"Now off we go!" cried Ned.

"But where?" asked Dick.

"Back to Copper Centre, of course. Is there any other place for us to go to?"

"There's the cave, Ned."

"But we can do nothing there now. We have one load of gold on our boat already, and that's just as much as we can carry."

"The cave! The cave, I say!" cried the Unknown. "I've my reasons for it."

"Afraid that Hart and his friend have stolen our gold? Nonsense!" said Ned. "Supposing they found it, what could they do with it? How could they carry it away, and where would they take it?—because we know they dare not show themselves in Copper Centre again?"

"We'll get back to the town, Ned," said Dick.

"Well, well, do what you like, dear boys; it won't matter much. I begin to think I'm no good," grumbled the Unknown.

"Come off that, Zed. Don't make us tired. I tell you we're going."

As Ned spoke the wind caught the sail, filling it instantly, and the ice boat bounded away along the glacier, making a bee line for Copper Centre.

When they had gone a few miles the wind shifted and it was necessary to tack, and in doing so they were brought in the direction of the cave, but it was still a considerable distance away.

"Hart and Indian Jack made for the cave," said Edith, abruptly.

"You must have good eyes, Edith, if you were able to see as far as that."

"There's no need to look very far, Ned," answered the girl. "They've left their trail on the snow, and if you examine the glacier closely you can see the footprints."

"Gracious! but that's true. Edith, you're the cutest of us all, for we never noticed anything, which isn't to be wondered at, seeing there's scarcely any impression."

"So I suppose we do go to the cave now, Ned," remarked the Unknown; "the old detective was not so far wrong after all."

"We'll look in at the cave certainly," answered Ned, "not because there's any need for it, but the wind's blown us this way, and we may as well go in as we're passing."

"You have to find it first," cried Dick. "Steer in close to the rocks; that will give us more chance."

It was perfectly dark now. They had several lanterns burning on the boat and these gave some light, but the distance that was illuminated was not great.

Ned was following Dick's advice, though it was

dangerous to do so, for at any moment the boat might crash into the rocks.

"This won't do!" cried Ned, at length. "If we want to find the cave, let's get to work the proper way. We might as well look for a needle in a bundle of straw as go on like this."

"Very probably we've passed the cave," said Edith.

"That's what I'm thinking. Round with the helm!" cried Ned.

Dick, without knowing why the order was given, obeyed it instantly, bringing the boat up into the wind, and, of course, it came to a standstill at once.

"We must search for the cave on foot," said Ned. "If we follow the rocks we're bound to strike it."

Along they went, carrying two lanterns with them. The third they left burning on the ice boat so that its whereabouts might be marked.

Ned was in rather a bad temper, for he had been anxious to get back to Copper Centre, and he looked upon the visit to the cave as a pure waste of time. Consequently he was not greatly interested, when a shout from the Unknown proclaimed that he had found it.

"Before we go in," said the Unknown, "I've something to propose. We have plenty of wood in the cave, and we have our stores on the ice boat. Now, why shouldn't we pass the night here. We can make a roaring fire and be quite as warm in our bearskins as we should be at the town."

"That's the best speech you made to-day, Zed," cried Dick. "I'm dead tired. Hauling that ice boat was no joke, and I guess we're all in about the same state."

"I know I am, and I did very little of the work," said Edith.

"Very well, we stay here the night," assented Young Klondike.

"That's settled!" exclaimed the Unknown. "Now to bring the ice boat under cover."

This was the work of a few minutes, the express being placed a few yards inside the cavern, but fearing that Hart and Indian Jack might be about, the boat was secured by ropes, one end of them being passed around the mast, the other around some projecting rocks.

"Not good enough, Ned," cried the Unknown. "I'll stand guard all night in case that man Hart tries to play me a trick. What in thunder!" he suddenly shouted, breaking off short.

The fire was blazing brightly now, for Edith and Dick had made it whilst Ned and the detective attended to the boat, and the flames lit up every part of the cavern.

"What in thunder!" repeated the Unknown, gazing with a startled expression towards the farther end of the cave. "By the Jumping Jeremiah!"

"He sees a ghost!" cried Ned, laughingly.

"No, my man! Run to earth at last!" exclaimed Dick, with a fresh burst of laughter.

"He sees a big hole in the ground!" said the Un-

known, slowly, "and it's a blame sight more like crying than laughing he feels."

"Our gold!" shouted Ned, loudly.

"Gone!" cried Dick, thunderstruck at this unlooked for occurrence.

"No need to ask who has it," said Edith. "Imagine the look on Ben Daniels' face when he hears of it."

"They must have had tools; a pick and shovel for certain," said Ned. "Now, we know that Hart and Indian Jack had nothing of the kind."

"Not when they left us," Dick remarked.

"But where could they have got them? Maybe it's some one else been at work here."

"Hart and Indian Jack," said the Unknown, firmly. "That's my verdict, and I stick to it. To pass the night here now is out of the question, of course, for we must get on their trail right away."

"Out with the boat!" cried Ned, excitedly. "We'll sail to Copper Centre."

"They won't go there."

"But we may hear of them there. They dare not cross the glacier towards Caribou creek, knowing that we were at that end of it. Besides they couldn't carry the gold across. I don't want to lose that gold, I can tell you, but I think less of that than of squaring accounts with Hart."

"Bravo!" cried the Unknown. "Now, you're of the same mind as me. That's the way to talk, Ned."

The detective hustled about as he talked, unfastening the ropes that held the boat to the rock, and then helping Ned and Dick to drag it out of the cave to the glacier.

A moment later the express was flying over the ice, those on board of it keeping a close watch as they went for the men who had stolen their gold.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ANOTHER ICE BOAT ON THE GLACIER.

COPPER CENTRE was reached without anything having been seen of the two thieves.

Late though it was, the arrival of the ice boat created some excitement and miners came out of their huts to see what the matter was. Outside Casey's Ben Daniels was standing, the old miner having heard that Young Klondike had come.

"Bad news, Ben," said Ned quietly to him. "Keep what I say to yourself, for we don't want everybody to know what's happened. All the gold left in the cave has been dug up out of the ground and made away with."

Daniels gave a savage cry.

"Tell me who it was," he said in a hoarse voice, speaking quietly but with great bitterness, "and by gosh, I'll let daylight into him!"

"Reckon there are two or three others willing to have a hand in the fun, Daniels," said Ned, "but we must get within striking distance before we can do anything."

"But, say, boss, who did it?"

"We have no absolute proof," answered Ned,

"but we are pretty sure who it was. Hart and Indian Jack. Seen anything of them round Copper Centre to-night?"

"Hart in Copper Centre!" cried Daniels. "Well, I should smile!"

"Say, was you looking for Hi Hart here, Young Klondike?" asked Jim Casey, the saloon keeper, who had heard the name mentioned.

"I want to find him. Has anyone here seen anything of him to-day?" inquired Ned.

"Thunder! is it likely? Say, boys," said Casey, turning to the crowd, "any of you fellers set eyes on Hart?"

The answer to the inquiry was a loud burst of laughter.

"Boss," said Phil Burton, the chief of the vigilance committee, "look for Hart anywhere 'cept in Copper Centre. Old Hi knows there's a rope waiting for him here, and you bet he'll fight shy of our town. But what might you want him for?"

"Nothing of any importance," said Ned, determined not to disclose what had happened.

"If you should see him," observed the Unknown, "just say we were asking for him, that's all."

Ned, Dick, Edith and the Unknown, along with Ben Daniels, shut themselves up in a room in Casey's, whilst the crowd dispersed, some of the men tumbling into their beds, from which the disturbance had drawn them, others going back to the bar.

"We must hold a counsel," said Ned, while they all stared blankly at each other. "We've been checkmated. The game's gone dead against us so far. We must decide on our next move."

"We haven't the least clew," remarked Edith. "Those two men seem to have vanished in a most mysterious manner."

"This is a good time for the Unknown to show his skill. What's the good of us having our own detective," inquired Dick, "if he can't advise us in this emergency?"

"Ah! but he can advise you, dear boy," said the Unknown, promptly.

"And what is your advice, Zed?"

"To sleep. We can do nothing in the dark. Besides, they say the night brings counsel, and in the morning we may hit on something good."

"Well, sleep let it be," cried Ned, with a dissatisfied air. "But mind, to-morrow we start out after those two men, and we won't let up till we run them down."

"Bully for you, boss!" cried Daniels. "I'll be with you, for now I'm all right again."

Long before it was light the next day, they were all astir, waiting for day to come, and this would not be till after nine o'clock.

Dick, Ned and Edith had a good deal to say to each other, Daniels joining in the talk occasionally, but the Unknown kept silent. The detective's movements were mysterious. He seemed trying to keep cool, and was in a state of suppressed excitement all the while.

Ned knew that something of importance must have

taken place, for he was well acquainted with the Unknown's peculiarities. He knew that to question the Unknown now would be to get either evasive replies or no answer at all.

Therefore he refrained from saying anything, but Dick and Edith's curiosity was too great to allow either of them to keep silent.

"Say, Zed!" cried Dick, as the Unknown put his head inside the door of the room, for about the fiftieth time that morning, "what's the secret? You look as if you'd got something on your mind."

The Unknown said nothing. He simply smiled and walked away.

"Zed! Zed!" cried Edith, sharply. "You make me mad. I'm just dying to hear you talk, and you won't tell me a thing."

The Unknown looked at a clock.

"In fifteen minutes I shall have something to say," he said, and promptly disappeared again.

"That means," said Ned, "when it's daylight. Dick, you and Edith ought to know it's only wasting time to try and draw anything out of the Unknown when he doesn't want to talk. He shuts up like a clam."

"Time!" cried the Unknown fourteen minutes later, bursting into the room in a state of great excitement. "It's light now. We must be off."

"But I absolutely decline to go," said Ned, "unless I know where I'm going and for what purpose."

"Dear boy, nothing in the world is easier to answer. You're going across the Valdes glacier in the direction of Caribou creek to get the gold and the men who stole it."

"But who says they are there?"

"I do, Ned," answered the detective.

"When did you find that out?" asked Dick, laughingly.

"Dreamt it in the night, Zed!"

"Come, come," cried the Unknown, "these questions tire me. Do as I tell you, and I promise you, that you shall not go half a mile without agreeing with me. Ned, I give you leave to pitch me off the boat if I'm wrong."

"I take you at your word, Zed," exclaimed Ned, "so look out."

There were a number of people to see the ice boat leave, and some two or three miners would have been glad to have crossed the glacier, but Young Klondike explained he was taking no passengers that trip.

"Half a mile, mind," said Dick. "Don't forget your promise, Zed."

"I'll be the judge of the distance!" cried Edith. "Don't expect any mercy from me, Zed, for I'm right out of patience with you."

"I'll trouble you to let me steer this craft," said the Unknown, much to everybody's surprise, for he had never been seen to handle the tiller before.

Ned gave way to him, and the detective, pressing his tall hat tightly down on his head to prevent it from being blown away, took up his station at the helm.

The two boys, Edith and Daniels were staring in every direction now, seeking some explanation that would justify the Unknown's confidence.

They looked right and left, and saw on one side two miles of ice, and a mile on the other, and in front mile upon mile of ice, shining like silver in the sun. Nothing living but themselves appeared to be on the glacier.

"There!" cried the Unknown suddenly, in tones of triumph, "I said I would give you a proof, and there it is!"

As he said this, he pointed towards some marks upon the ice.

"I see those marks plain enough," cried Ned, scornfully. "And of course I know what they are. It is the trail left by the ice boat passing along."

"And that's my proof," persisted the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, while you folks were sound asleep, I was at work, and the night was half over before I struck this trail."

"You could strike twenty such trails," said Dick, angrily, "for we've passed over here often enough."

"Something wrong with Zed," remarked Edith. "Pity there's no doctor in these parts, for I'm sure he's in a very bad way."

The Unknown was not angry in the least degree. He looked from one to the other with an amazed expression on his face.

"What! Don't any of you see?" he demanded. "You don't? Well, that's mighty strange. Here goes for the explanation then. Look well at this trail, Ned, that runs alongside us."

"I've been staring at it for ten minutes."

"Do you notice that it's at least eighteen inches narrower than the trail left by our boat?"

"By gracious!" cried Ned, "so it is."

"Ah! now you begin to see," exclaimed the Unknown. "The scales drop off your eyes, don't they? Ye gods and little fishes! there's another ice boat on this glacier, and I was the man that found it out."

Anybody could see the difference in the width of the two trails now it had been pointed out.

"I take back all I said, Zed!" cried Edith. "You're great!"

"Well, you've certainly made a valuable discovery," said Ned. "Hart must have had an ice boat built, and that accounts for his long stay in Copper Centre. He must have got it on to the glacier, somehow, in the darkness, and had it stowed away somewhere."

"Our chances of getting the gold back don't look very bright," said Dick. "He's had a long start, and must have reached the other side of the glacier, almost as soon as we got to Copper Centre last night."

"But you'll follow him, won't you, boss?" inquired Daniels, anxiously.

"You bet I will. I don't turn back when I begin a thing. We'll run him to earth," answered Ned, "if we have to go down to the sea to do it."

There was only one thing to do now, and that was to keep close to the trail left by Hart's ice boat, and

this was not a difficult matter, because the runners had cut deep marks in the ice.

The boat made one of its rapid trips, for the wind was behind it, and it tried the strength of the mast to stand up against the strain that was put upon it.

"There's the crevasse into which you fell," cried Dick. "Look, Ned, those two scoundrels took big chances in the dark, for the trail of their boat is almost up to the edge of the abyss."

"Shows what men will do for the sake of gold," said Edith.

"Yes, miss," observed Daniels, "it's an old miner like me can speak to that."

The Unknown at this point surprised everybody by stopping the boat.

"There's a piece of paper on the ice, dear boy," he explained. "It's stuck in a crack, and that keeps it from being blown away."

"I'll get it!" cried Dick, jumping from the boat as he spoke. He picked up the paper and came back.

"Why, Ned," he exclaimed, as he perused it. "Your writing on it, beyond a doubt. Look!"

Ned grasped it eagerly.

"A letter I wrote!" he cried, turning pale. "It looks to me as if things were much worse than we ever expected. This letter is one I sent some time back to the bank at Juneau asking them to fetch our gold. When their agent met me here he had this letter with him."

"How does it come on the ice?" asked Edith.

"I can only think of one explanation," answered Ned. "It was here that Hart and Indian Jack landed when they jumped from our boat just before it went into the crevasse."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the Unknown, "Hart must have held up the agent."

"It's a sure thing," said Ned.

"By gosh!" cried Daniels, savagely, "he's got all our gold except what we have on this boat now."

"Every nugget," said Ned, and the more reason why we must hunt him down. "We've come to the end of the glacier now, and we may as well start after him. Depend upon it, Hart and Indian Jack have struck out for Caribou creek."

"Why not hide the boat in one of the clefts in the rocks, Ned," asked Dick.

"There's no need. Neither of the two scoundrels will look for it, for they saw it dash into the crevasse, and of course they think it's done with."

"That's true," replied Dick, "but why shouldn't we look for Hart's boat. It must be near here."

"Reckon it is," answered Ned, "but let that wait. We must find those rascals first."

"It's going to be a blame slow business, this getting down the rocks," exclaimed the Unknown, slipping as he spoke.

"Then why in thunder do you wear those big boots?" cried Ned. "Why don't you dress like other people?"

"Why am I here at all," groaned the Unknown as he rubbed himself. "Why didn't I find my man

years ago and save myself from wandering in Siberia, the Soudan and fifty other places?"

"You just quit that!" cried Ned, laughing, however, as he spoke. "You've never been within five thousand miles of the Soudan, so don't give us any more of that talk. Step as lively as you can, and keep a good lookout, all of you. If Hart sees us first he may do some mischief."

More than an hour must have passed and no signs of Hart or the agent had been seen. As a matter of fact they had only gone a few hundred yards, owing to the dangerous descent.

"The trail, such as it is, separates here," said Ned. "Dick, you and the Unknown go one way. Edith, I and Daniels will take the other track. By doing this we're bound to fall in with them, and either party is strong enough to tackle Hart and Indian Jack."

"I forgive them if they escape me," growled Daniels, striding over the rocks as he spoke, whilst Dick and the Unknown went off in the other direction.

In less than half an hour, to make matters worse night came on, and in order to proceed it was necessary to use lanterns. Without them, at any moment, they might have fallen over a precipice, and with them they made fine marks for the men they were engaged in tracking, so there was danger either way.

"Listen!" said Edith, putting her hand on Ned's arm, "didn't you hear something?"

"'Twas a six-shooter, boss," cried Daniels.

"Then be silent," answered Ned, hastily, "for that shot must have been fired by the enemy. Neither Dick nor the Unknown can have got so far down yet. Keep close together now and have your rifles handy."

On they went again until they were suddenly brought to a standstill. From the other side of a high rock which stood in their path, words spoken in loud tones came.

The first speaker was Hart. They recognized his voice.

"Here's the last chance I give you!" he cried. "Surrender or I'll slaughter you!"

"Never!" replied a determined voice. "If you want the gold come and take it!"

Undoubtedly it was the agent of the bank who made this brave answer. Ned recognized his voice.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DISCOVERY OF HART'S ICE BOAT.

NED at once climbed up the rocks, taking care to make as little noise as possible, but he had his trouble for nothing, for it was so dark that he could not see anything.

The talk had now entirely ceased, and there was nothing to indicate the direction in which Hart and his agent were.

All at once there was a noise as if some object had been broken violently.

"They've burst open a door, Ned," whispered

Edith, who had joined Ned on the rock. "That's what the noise means."

"Great Heaven, if that's so the agent is a dead man!" cried Ned. "Daniels, we must save him if we can."

Daniels had not waited for this. Already he had passed around the base of the rock, and was going as fast as he could towards the place from which the noise had proceeded.

At this point Edith incautiously stood up, and in doing so the lantern she carried was instantly seen, and two shots came whizzing her way.

The zip of the bullets was heard as they past Ned and the girl, so it was evident that Hart had seen them.

"Stay here, Edith!" shouted Ned. "Daniels, we must rush on these men and finish this business, or they'll finish us, sure."

"Better keep back, Young Klondike!" cried Hart, out of the darkness. "Me and my pard ain't in a very good humor just now. What may you want, boss?"

"Our gold, you blame thief!" shouted Daniels, hoarse with passion. "You're in a tight corner now, Hart, and we'll see you don't get out of it."

Again the report of a rifle was twice heard.

"That's our answer!" roared Hart, defiantly, as he and Indian Jack both fired.

"I'm hit!" shouted the latter, a moment later. "Thunder! but the bullets are just a bit too lively, pard. Seems as if they could see us."

Hart gave a cry of rage now, for he saw what it was that had drawn this deadly fire on himself and his associate.

The agent had opened the door of the hut slightly and had shown a light. At once Edith, Daniels and Ned had brought their rifles to bear on this point.

"You've signed your own death warrant!" shouted Hart, turning towards the hut. "Come, Jack, we have him now."

The two ruffians rushed at the open door, expecting to find it shut in their faces, and that they would have to force it, instead of which it yielded instantly, and they were inside without effort.

Standing at the door the two men blazed away, and their shots were answered immediately from the rocks.

"Don't let them escape, Ned!" shouted a voice. "We'll take a hand in this, won't we, Zed?"

Dick and the Unknown had heard the noise of the fight, and they had made all the haste possible, so that they might take part in it.

"Is it Hart?" called the Unknown.

"That's who it is," answered Ned. "There's a hut over there, and when we came up we found them attacking the bank agent."

"Then he's alive! That's good news!" cried the Unknown.

"He was a few minutes ago, but I can't say what may have happened since. Down with you, Zed!"

A bullet whistled past.

"There's no good in making targets of ourselves for those fellows to practice on," Young Klondike added then.

"I can see something moving!" cried Dick, suddenly.

"It's moving toward us," added Edith, covering the object with her rifle as she spoke. "Who are you?"

"Put a bullet into the critter, miss," said Daniels, "and ask the question afterward."

"Don't shoot! I am a friend!"

"The bank agent!" cried Ned. "This way, sir. Can you see us?"

"No."

Ned raised the lantern above the rock for an instant in order to point out their whereabouts to the agent, and at once several bullets came whistling by, showing that the enemy was near and keeping a close watch on everything that happened.

The agent now speedily joined the others, who were hiding behind the rocks.

"Young Klondike," said the agent, recognizing Ned, "you have come just in time to save your gold and me, too."

"Where is the gold?" asked Ned.

"There's a hut over there," said the agent; "Hart and his friend made a prisoner of me and shut me up in it while they were away. I managed to free myself. I could have got right off, but I had the gold to think of, and thought I could hold the hut against them. But I found I couldn't, for the door wasn't strong enough, so out I slipped and found you."

"So Hart and Indian Jack are in the hut now?" inquired Ned.

"There's not a doubt of it," answered the agent. "I was just able to see them glide in there as I came away."

"Thank goodness, we have those men at last," cried Edith.

"But we haven't got them, Edith," Dick observed, "and it won't be an easy matter to get them either. Two men can do a lot of mischief when they're firing from behind walls."

"True enough, dear boy," said the Unknown; "but as a rule the only opening to fire from is the door. We know where that is, so we'll attack the hut from the other side."

"We'll wait here till morning if we have to, and keep a close watch," said Ned.

"That won't do, Ned," exclaimed the Unknown. "They could get out of the hut in the darkness. It's dead easy to do that, and we'd look like a lot of fools when daylight came."

"Then we must make an attack at once!" cried Ned. "You're quite right, Zed, there's no time to waste; we must get right to work. Where should you say the door of the hut was?"

"As near as I can judge we're facing it now," said the agent.

"Very well; we'll work on that basis and attack it from the side. We can get quite close to the hut

without running any risk, for this ledge of rocks we're behind continues for a good distance."

When they judged they were in line with the side of the hut they halted.

The Unknown took the lantern and placed it on the top of the rocks.

"Out with that light!" cried Ned, angrily. "Who is it who's so foolish as to show them where we are?"

"I'm that cuss," said the Unknown, "and you'll just allow me to say there's nothing foolish about it, Ned. I wanted to find out whether they could see us, and as they haven't fired, it's a dead sure thing they can't."

"Well, there is something in that."

"I should think there was. The road to the hut is clear now," said the Unknown. "Let us attack it at once."

"Scatter yourselves!" cried Ned, "and get to the place as quietly as possible. Leave the lantern where it is. We want no light."

Cautiously the advance was made, everybody taking part in it, for Edith had refused to stay behind. They were no longer moving over rocks, but crossing the snow so that their feet made scarcely any noise. Not a sound came from the hut, nor even when they got close to it did they hear anything.

"Some trickery!" muttered Ned. "They're laying a trap for us."

The agent caught Ned by the sleeve.

"Look!" he said, in a whisper. "The door of the hut is open."

"Then they must be inside ready to shoot us down," answered Ned.

The Unknown was hammering against the hut with the butt of his rifle.

"Come! out of that!" he shouted. "You can't get away now, so the less trouble you make the better it will be for you."

"That doesn't draw them," said Dick.

"I've a suspicion," said the Unknown, "that we've been left again. You can't hear a sound! Why? because there's nobody to make any noise. Ned, let's make a rush all together and take our chance."

It was decided to do so, and with Ned and the Unknown at their head, the party dashed through the open door, expecting to be greeted with a few bullets.

"The lantern, the lantern!" cried the Unknown, excitedly. "We'll see what's going on here. It's certain our men have run. Show the light here, Dick," he added, as it was brought to the hut.

Dick swung it around, lighting up every part of the small hut as he did so.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the Unknown "it's empty! Just as I thought! Ye gods and little fishes, the gold's gone, too!"

"The gold gone!" shouted Daniels. "That can't be!"

"Find it, find it!" retorted the Unknown. "If it's here show it to me!"

"Was the gold in the hut when you left it?" asked Ned of the agent.

"It was," answered the latter, "and it was in the same state as when you delivered it to me on the glacier. The sailcloth in which it was packed has never been opened."

"Say, boss," cried Daniels, "they must have buried the stuff under the floor of the hut 'fore they skipped."

"Impossible," replied Ned. "The ground's hard as a rock. One look will show you this earth has not been touched. The gold has been carried away."

"Blame strong men those," said the Unknown, "to walk off with that load. I know what it weighs, for I helped to carry it out of the cave when it was lashed to the ice boat, and by gosh, it nearly broke my back in two."

"Anyway we shan't settle the question by staying here," said Ned. "Let us find Hart, and we shall find the gold."

"It's a poor show we have," observed Dick. "Not the slightest clew, and so dark that we couldn't see them if they were right in front of us."

"But we could hear them," cried Edith.

"One thing is sure," said Ned. "We know very well they didn't go down towards Caribou creek when they left the hut. If they'd done that they must have passed us. Let us go right ahead and take our chances."

"And lock out for the bag of gold as we go," cried Dick, "for likely enough they had to drop it."

"We can't look for the gold without using the lantern," said Edith, "and that would give us away."

"You bet it won't," answered the Unknown. "They won't fire on us. I'm dead sure, for that would show us where they were. Anyway let them fire if they like and we'll take our chance of being hit."

The Unknown hastily took the lantern from Edith.

"Reckon I'll carry that myself," he said. "Edith, you get behind. It's safer."

To follow a trail on frozen snow is not easy at any time. But to find a trail in the dark to which there was not the faintest clew, was almost an impossibility.

"We might just as well have made ourselves at home for the night in the hut," said Dick.

"I have it!" cried Ned, suddenly. "I know where they are!"

"You know?" exclaimed the Unknown. "I admit I don't, and yet I imagine I was rather a star in the detective line."

"You don't shine very bright just now, Zed," retorted Young Klondike. "Why, of course those men have gone back to the glacier. They must have left their ice boat there, and they've made tracks for it."

"Right you are, Ned," cried the Unknown, "and we'll make tracks for them, too, once we get back to the trail that leads up the gorge, and it won't take us long to reach the glacier."

Everybody felt that Ned's theory was the correct

one, and now it seemed strange that it had not occurred to anybody before. At once they retraced their steps, and less than half an hour's walking brought them to the path down which they had come when they descended from the glacier.

To some extent they were familiar with the road, having passed over it more than once, so this enabled them to make more rapid progress than they had been doing since they had left the hut.

Daniels still continued to lead the way. His hatred of Hart was intense, and he meant to put a bullet into him if he got within range.

Once he thought he saw Hart in the darkness, and quick as a flash his rifle was at his shoulder and he fired.

Ned was angry.

"Daniels," he said, "this isn't the way to find those men. You've given them notice of our approach, so that they can get out of our way."

"Boss, thought I saw the blame skunk. But you're right, and I'm going to keep quiet now."

"We've lost the trail," cried Dick, at this point. "I'm dead sure this isn't the way we came."

"That doesn't matter," answered Ned, "because the glacier is right ahead of us, and it's not important where we happen to strike it. We'll be on the ice in a few minutes now."

This statement caused everyone to be silent, because even the sound of their voices might be sufficient to warn Hart and the other man of their approach. They were almost out of the gorge, and the darkness was less impenetrable than it had been.

"The glacier!" cried Dick, suddenly.

"Silence!" said Ned.

"But there's no harm, Ned, in talking now," said Dick, "for it's right in front of us."

"And there's something more right in front of us," cried the Unknown, excitedly. "Look! Look! By the Jumping Jeremiah! there's Hart's ice boat on the glacier. Ye gods and little fishes! we have them now!"

## CHAPTER X.

### A RACE ACROSS THE GLACIER.

"We must chase them!" cried Ned.

"Perhaps that's our boat they have," exclaimed Edith.

"No, no, Edith," answered the Unknown. "The sail's not big enough. Let us hope, though, that nothing has happened to our boat. Those men may have smashed it, for all we can tell."

"We shall soon see," cried Ned, dashing across the ice toward the spot where the ice boat had been left, followed by all hands.

It was an anxious moment for everybody, for it was very probable that Hart and Indian Jack had destroyed Young Klondike's ice boat, and in that case there would be no chance of capturing them. However, this apprehension proved to be groundless, for apparently the ice boat was just as they had left it.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick. "Now we'll shake them up!"

The whole party jumped on board, Ned instantly took the helm, but the boat did not move because the sail did not fill.

The Unknown and Dick, seeing what was the matter, sprang off, and in an instant they had turned the stern of the boat in the right direction, and so strong was the breeze that the craft was on the move before Dick and the detective were on board again.

"They're a mile ahead, I reckon," said the Unknown.

"That's not very far, we shan't have much trouble in catching them," said Ned.

"It's dead easy!" cried Dick. "Why, Ned, we're sailing half as fast again as they are. Their sail is getting plainer every minute."

"The boat's flying, there's no mistake about that," said Ned. "What fools those fellows must have been not to have taken our boat and left us theirs. Then the laugh would have been on us."

"They had plenty of time to ruin our boat if they liked," said Edith. "So we must be grateful to them for not doing it."

"So grateful, miss," said Daniels, turning round with a grim smile on his face, "that I'll save them from hanging, anyway. I'll put some lead into them."

Excitement ran high now on Young Klondike's Ice Boat Express.

Every moment the distance between the two boats was lessening, and very soon they would be within speaking distance of each other. Daniels, rifle in hand, was sitting up in the bow of the boat ready for business.

"Guess I may as well do something," he said, quietly, and with that he began to fire at Hart's ice boat.

"Stop!" cried Ned. "There's no need to kill those men. We will capture them and run them out of the country."

"Let's run them out when they're dead, boss," said Daniels. "Then we'll know they won't get back."

And the old miner continued to fire.

"Let him have his way, Ned," said the Unknown. "It's too dark, in all probability for him to hit anybody, and if he does I shan't feel very bad about it."

"Take the helm," said Ned. "I'm going to have a talk with those fellows. I'll just give them a chance before Daniels has killed them off."

Handing the tiller to the detective, Ned crossed the boat, going over to where Daniels was sitting.

"Hello!" he cried. "Hold on there! You can't get away, so why don't you stop? Do you hear me?"

"What's the use of talking to dead men, boss?" said Daniels. "Reckon I've fixed 'em."

"Maybe you have," answered Ned, waiting in vain for an answer to his demand. "Anyway, we'll see in a moment or two, for we're almost up with them."

Ned's boat overhauled Hart's, even quicker than he had expected. The wind had suddenly changed,

and the Unknown instantly changed his course to suit, and was now sailing across the glacier towards the great crags that rose above the ice.

As he did so, Hart's boat took a sudden turn, traveled slowly about twenty yards, and then came to a standstill.

"You surrender?" cried Ned, as he watched this maneuver. "Stop her, Zed! Quick! Quick!"

"Stop her, it is!" answered the Unknown, bringing her up short as he spoke.

"Now to settle accounts with Hart!" cried Dick, as he followed Ned off the boat.

"Guess I'll just look at the corpses," said Daniels, doing the same.

The Unknown, Edith and the agent were crossing the ice rapidly, all carrying rifles and ready to shoot in case there was any need.

Ned and the Unknown arrived at the boat together, and astounded at what they saw, they looked on in perfect amazement, for Hart's ice boat was deserted.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the Unknown. "Hi Hart's the slickest cuss we've run up against. He's made a show of us, that's what he's done."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Daniels, as he looked in vain for the bodies of the men he had shot, as he supposed.

"Why, they must have tumbled off the boat."

"That's what they've done," said Dick; "no doubt they're lying dead on the glacier."

"Hope so, anyway," growled Daniels.

"Then they're not far away," said the Unknown, "because the boat only altered her course about fifty yards back. That must have been the time when the man at the helm was settled."

"I can't make this out!" cried Ned, "why the tiller's tied fast. Look at it."

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed the Unknown, bending down to take a good look. "I see it all. That cuss has fooled us all the way round."

"But I don't see it," said Ned. "To me the whole business is quite mysterious. Whom have we been chasing across the glacier, Zed?"

"Dear boy, we've been having all the fun to ourselves. We've had a hot pursuit after our ice boat with nobody on it."

"Nobody on it?"

"You bet there wasn't a soul on board," said the Unknown. "Hart and Indian Jack reached their ice boat after they got away from the hut. Then they set a trap for us. They lashed the tiller and fixed the sail. Then when we came on the glacier they saw us. Instantly they started their boat before the wind and we saw it, as they knew we should and gave chase. That's the explanation of the mystery, and it's all just as clear to me as if I'd seen it all."

"Likely enough you're right," said Ned, "but still you'll admit that these proceedings are strange. Why should they risk the loss of their ice boat?"

"To get rid of us, Ned. They have two-thirds of our gold and that's worth keeping. By sending us off on this fool's errand they got time to slip right away. Hart's getting deeper in my debt every day.

There's going to be trouble between us when we meet."

"Guess we've talked enough," cried Ned. "Words won't catch those fellows and won't do us any good either. Sleep's the best thing for all of us, so we'll run to the cave which is not far away. You sail Hart's boat, Dick, and we'll start at once."

The two boats ran along in lively fashion until the cave was reached.

"Wonder Hart didn't take the cave along," growled Daniels. "Mighty good of him to leave it behind."

"Ned! Ned?" cried Edith, suddenly.

Young Klondike turned quickly towards the girl, thinking from the excited way in which she spoke that some danger threatened her. Dick and the Unknown hearing her, hurried over at once.

"The gold's gone!" cried Edith.

"That's no news," answered Dick. "Thought you were going to say it had come back."

"But they've taken the rest of it, the package that was under our ice boat," persisted Edith.

"What!" cried Ned. "No, no, Edith, that can't possibly be."

But stooping down as he spoke to see if it was so, he found he had correctly stated the position of affairs.

"The gold's gone, that's sure," said Ned, "but still I don't think they have taken it. Probably it's fallen off on the glacier."

"The cords that lashed it to the boat are cut clean through," said Dick.

"That's proof enough. Well, this beats me," said Ned, disgustedly.

"It's a blame fine thing, this mining gold for Hart," cried Daniels. "By gosh! I'm through with it."

"Boys, I'm out of business," said the Unknown. "My man will get right off now. Hart's done me, and I've taken my shingle down. I'm a detective no longer."

"Good for you," said Dick. "That's about the most sensible thing you've said for some time. Take a rest, and get your eyes peeled, and in time you may amount to something."

In the morning the Unknown was nowhere to be seen. He was not in the cave, and he was not visible on the glacier. Evidently he had made one of his mysterious disappearances.

"We shall see him again," said Dick.

"I'm not so sure about that," Edith remarked. "I don't think he liked what you said, Dick, about getting his eyes peeled."

"Pshaw! A little thing like that wouldn't trouble the Unknown, Edith. Why, Ned and I have given him that kind of talk often."

Edith prepared a good breakfast, and as it was a long time since any of them had had a meal, it was thoroughly enjoyed.

"Say, boss," said Daniels, "seeing we're here, we might's well get to work."

"What kind of work?" asked Ned.

"Mining."

"There's no need," cried Dick. "Besides, we've got all the gold there is here."

"Reckon the firm of Golden & Luckey's about all right," answered the old miner, "but where does Ben Daniels come in? Hart's got my share, and by gosh, I didn't come all the way round here from Sitka to starve. My old pard, Jim Norwood, told me this cave was full of the yellow metal, and I'll work it alone if you fellers won't lend a hand."

"It was my intention, Daniels," said Ned, "to put a gang of men on to work this place in the spring. If there's any gold to be got at easily, a few days' work here won't hurt us. Besides, we may as well stay where we are for a time, so that the Unknown may know where to find us in case he comes back."

Ned's reason for remaining was a very good one, so it was decided to commence work at once.

Daniels, after some prospecting, fixed on a place where a shaft was to be sunk, some distance further from the entrance to the cavern than where the gold had been obtained before.

A great wood fire was made at the place indicated, and log after log was thrown in it, so as to keep it blazing for a long time.

This softened the ground very much, so that they were able to get out the earth.

The bank agent was still with them, for they had brought him across the glacier on the ice boat. He went to work with the others, hauling the dirt out of the shaft, and sometimes taking a turn at digging.

It was slow work, and before they reached the black sand three days had passed by.

The agent and Edith now boiled down the ice for washing purposes, and this kept them busy, for a quantity of water was needed.

"It's a big strike," cried Ben Daniels. "I'm dead sure of it."

"I've seen nothing yet," said Ned, "to cause me to agree with you. Out of all the sand we've washed we haven't got an ounce."

"It's the look of the stuff, boss, I'm building on."

"I'd like to see some color, Daniels."

"Guess we'll go a bit deeper."

"No harm in doing so, though I'm not expecting to find much."

"That's a nice frame of mind to be in," cried Edith, with a laugh. "Then you won't be disappointed, Ned."

Not only did they dig deeper, but as Daniels was not satisfied, a drift was run and many buckets of dirt were hauled up and washed in the rocker.

"Don't waste an ounce of it," Daniels," said Dick. "It's a great strike, I don't think."

Daniels was bound to confess that a good trial had been made.

"I think there's a pile of gold in this cavern yet," he said, "only we haven't struck it."

"Out of the whole lot of us," said Dick, "there's only one man who's shown any sense."

"And who's that?" asked Edith.

"The Unknown," was Dick's answer. "He's off somewhere enjoying himself, while we've been working like galley slaves. You bet the Unknown knows what he's doing."

"Bully for you, Dick!" cried a familiar voice. "Even if he hasn't got his eyes peeled."

"The Unknown!" everybody exclaimed, surprised to see him walk into the cave so unexpectedly.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, it's what there is left of him anyway," answered the detective. "Boys, I've been living principally on fresh air the last few days and the diet's not very satisfying. Got any grub in the house?"

"It's your own fault," said Ned. "There's plenty of food here. No one asked you to get out. What made you do so?"

"Duty, dear boy, duty, Ned. I'm in the detective business again. Everything's going along well now, for I've found Hart's hiding place at last."

## CHAPTER XI.

### BEN DANIELS' LIFE IN DANGER.

"If that's true," said Ned, "it's great news."

"Great news!" cried Daniels. "Well, I guess it is. Great 'nough to make me throw up mining."

"You can bet it's true," said the Unknown. "I'm giving you no ghost story. I've seen Hart and Indian Jack with my own eyes."

"But how did you manage it?" asked Ned. "Where are they?"

"I left them between the mouth of Caribou creek and Tanana, pretty near the town."

"In a hut?"

"No, Ned. They've a small hut in the rock, hardly big enough to be called a cave, and there they've taken shelter. This is how I got onto them. I reckoned it was no use tramping about the country, and I also had a notion that they would be moving towards some town, so I settled down in a kind of shanty, from which I got a good view of the creek. 'They can't go by without my seeing them,' I said to myself, and sure enough, the second day along they came."

"You shadowed them, Zed?"

"You bet I did. Tracked them to their den, and then skipped back here like greased lightning. This time, Ned, we really have them. There is going to be no hitch now."

"Think they have the gold with them?" asked Dick.

"I'm dead sure of it. Why, I saw them moving one bag, anyway."

"I'm off!" cried Daniels, springing to his feet.

"Not alone?" inquired Ned, laughing. "You'll wait for us, won't you?"

"Guess you don't mean to waste much time here, boss, do you?" asked Daniels.

"Not a minute," replied Ned, "we're all ready to start out with the boat. Let's go!"

The ice boat was soon flying over the glacier with

the whole party on board. All were in the highest spirits, for the prospects were good. It seemed as if the long fight against Hart was about to be brought to a victorious conclusion.

When they came to the end of the glacier they left their boat, and started to descend the gorge to Caribou creek.

On the way plans were discussed. It was absolutely necessary that great caution should be used, for Hart was a very wily foe, and no doubt would be keeping a close lookout for Young Klondike.

Once out of the gorge traveling along the side of the creek was easy, and the Unknown prophesied that they would be at Hart's hiding place before the day was over.

The path led between two high rocks which prevented them from looking far ahead, but soon sounds came to their ears which told them that people were near.

"Maybe it's Hart," cried Daniels.

"Too many people talking for that," said the Unknown, "unless he's got a regular gang with him, and I hardly think that."

"If he has we shall have our work cut out for us. We won't go a step further!" exclaimed Ned. "Keep your rifles ready, we may have some shooting to do."

All this talk had taken place very quietly, so that none of it reached the ears of the approaching party. The consequence was that they were completely astounded when a sudden turn in the path brought them in sight of Young Klondike and his friends.

Ned and his party were surprised too.

They had not expected to see so many people, for not less than twenty men composed the crowd which confronted them now.

"That's him?" cried a voice, which shook with passion, as a man forced his way through the crowd toward Ned's party. "That's him!" repeated the man in a tone of great anger. "I see the old villain, and by gosh, he shan't escape me!"

The speaker brought his rifle to his shoulder at once, and covered Ben Daniels with it. His companions imitated his example, and instantly Ned and his friends found themselves looking down the barrels of twenty guns.

The boy was astounded but not terrified, for he knew no reason why his life should be threatened. Perfectly cool, he walked forward toward the strangers.

"Back!" cried the man who seemed to be acting as leader. "Not a step further if you want to live!"

"May I inquire what this means?" said Ned, speaking quite calmly.

The boy concluded that some mistake had been made, and that a few moments' talk would put things right.

"Ask that old cuss," replied the other man, pointing again to Daniels.

"But he knows no more about it than I do," said Ned. "How should he?"

"Say," said one of the strangers, "are we going

to hang about here all day? We've got business to attend to; let's do it."

"Right you are, mister," said the leader, addressing Ned again. "You are my prisoners."

"Prisoners!" repeated Ned, scornfully.

"That's what I said."

"But you have to take us first."

"That's done. Look!"

Ned turned round, and there he saw that his retreat, if he had wished to retire, was cut off. During the talk seven or eight men had made their way over the rocks, and posting themselves at the rear of Young Klondike, the latter found himself between two fires.

Ned did not experience any feeling of fear, only anger.

He was furious at finding himself treated in such a way without any reason.

"You seem to be the leader of this gang," he said, addressing the man who had done most of the talking, "and so I ask you to explain to me what all this means. Surely there must be some mistake. Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm not ashamed of my name, it's Dick Tredway," answered the man. "But, say, this is no place to do the business. Bring these men along, and we'll soon settle their hash."

The mob closed in on Young Klondike and his friends, who made no attempt at resistance, feeling sure that it would do no good.

Now they were hurried along toward Tanana, none of them being treated harshly except Ben Daniels, against whom, from time to time, savage looks were directed and threats were made.

"Can you understand this, Ned?" asked Dick, in a low voice.

"It's a mystery to me. I'm all in the dark," answered Ned, "but I feel sure that we shall come to an explanation soon. What's your idea about it, Zed?"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah!" cried the Unknown. "It's bad. We're cornered."

"Cornered! By whom?"

"You bet this is Hart's gang," answered the Unknown. "I'm expecting every minute to see him and Indian Jack show up."

"If your suspicions are correct, Zed, we're in a tight place. Let's hope you are wrong, and I think you are, because Daniels seems to be the man they're dead sore against, not us."

"Halt!" cried Dick Tredway, at this point, and under a large tree the whole crowd stopped, the Unknown glancing around in every direction for some signs of Hart, and his companions looking on with an expression of absolute wonderment on their faces.

"Mister," said Dick Tredway, "we're peaceful men, and we're going to carry this thing through right. There's going to be nothing crooked about us."

"But what does it all mean?" asked Ned, impatiently.

"Stand forward, Dupree, and tell your story," said Dick Tredway.

The man who had first pointed out Daniels then advanced to the front.

"I accuse that man," he said sternly, indicating Ben Daniels, "of being a thief. He robbed me of all my gold."

The face of Daniels was a study now. It was livid with passion. Indignation made him speechless for a few moments.

"A thief!" he cried savagely, finding his voice. "You call me that. Me, old Ben Daniels, known in these parts these twenty years?"

Daniels would have rushed at his accuser, but two strong men held his arms.

"Yes," repeated Dupree, "I call you a thief because you are one. I came over from Canada with my friends here after gold. I was lucky and got fifteen thousand dollars' worth. You came to my hut where it was hidden and stole it. You were recognized, for people saw you slinking away."

"It is not true," said Daniels, firmly. "I never set eyes on you before, and I don't know where your hut is."

The Canadians laughed derisively. The indignation of Daniels seemed to amuse them.

Ned thought he saw a way of setting matters right.

"When did this robbery take place?" he asked.

"Yesterday."

"Then Daniels is innocent beyond a doubt," cried Ned, triumphantly, "for he has been with us for several weeks traveling about on the Valdes glacier in our ice boat."

"An ice boat, an ice boat!" cried twenty voices.

"Well, what of it?" asked Ned. "Do you disbelieve me?"

"Guess we don't," answered Dick Tredway, "only it's like your gall to admit it. Why, the cuss that robbed Dupree was known to have an ice boat, and we were on our way to the glacier now, thinking we'd get across to Copper Centre where he'd likely enough gone. Better hold your tongue, mister. You only do your friend harm."

"I can put matters straight," said the Unknown, coming forward.

"Who in thunder are you, anyway?"

"I'm a detective."

"A detective! By gosh, you look like a cross between a parson and a trooper," answered Dick Tredway, casting his eyes from the Unknown's tall hat to his big cavalry boots.

"This man, our friend," said the Unknown, "is named Ben Daniels. The fellow you're after is called Hart, Hiram Hart. We know him. He's a thief, claim jumper and all around tough. At this moment we're on our way to his hiding place to capture him and get back seventy-five thousand dollars' worth of gold he's stolen from us."

"No good, mister," said Dick Tredway. "'Twon't wash."

"You don't believe me?" asked the Unknown, anxiously.

"You bet I don't, not one word. You're a slick cuss and you can talk smooth, but fairy tales don't go here. We've got our man and we mean to stick to him."

"But what are you going to do with him?" cried Dick, who saw that matters were getting serious.

"You'll see. Boys," said Dick Tredway, "guess you've heard enough."

"We want no more jaw," cried several men.

"And we won't have any, either. What is it to be? What's your verdict?"

"Death!" came in one shout from twenty angry men.

"Mister," said Tredway, turning to Daniels, and speaking in the most matter of fact way, as if the thing was of no importance, "you've got to swing. Guess we won't hurry you for a few minutes, but don't keep us waiting long."

Ned was aghast. Up to now he had not realized the seriousness of the affair, not dreaming that what was going on constituted a trial. It was clear now that these Canadians were in dead earnest and the life of old Daniels was in peril.

"You shall not touch him!" he cried, sternly, planting himself in front of Daniels. "I know him to be white. To hang this man will be murder."

"Guess it's better to run the risk of making a mistake," was Tredway's cold-blooded answer, "than to let this cuss go. Who are you, anyway?"

"My name is Golden, Ned Golden, of the firm of Golden & Luckey. This is my partner, Dick Luckey."

"Never heard of either of you. Did you, boys?"

"Not much."

"But you must have heard of Young Klondike," persisted Ned. "That's a name by which I'm known everywhere."

"We never heard of that, either."

"Surely, that can't be possible," Ned said, resolved to do his utmost to save Daniels. "I'm a millionaire. Your friend Dupree claims to have lost fifteen thousand dollars. Release Daniels and I will pay the money."

"Have you got the dollars in your pocket?" inquired Tredway, sarcastically.

"No, but I will write you out a check for the amount."

"What are you giving us?" cried Tredway, angrily. "A faro bank's the only kind of bank you know anything about."

"But what Mr. Golden says is quite true," said the bank agent from Juneau, stepping forward. "I am the agent of a bank at Juneau in which his firm have large sums deposited. Mr. Golden's check is as good as money."

Dick Tredway gave a contemptuous laugh, and absolutely refused to listen to one word more.

All this time the preparations for the lynching were

going on. Two men had climbed the tree and were busily engaged in fixing the rope.

Daniels saw that nothing more could be done. He realized that his friends had made a brave fight for his life and he thanked them warmly, Ned in particular, and he wrung the boy's hand in grateful recognition of his conduct.

Ned was deeply affected, and Edith was almost heartbroken.

"Never mind," said the brave old miner. "Don't take on so. It's got to be, though I'd like to have squared matters with that blamed cuss, Hart, before they strung me up."

The Unknown had been walking up and down quickly with his hands behind his back in a very disturbed state of mind. He was trying to discover some way in which Daniels' innocence might be proved.

"Will nothing satisfy you?" he cried suddenly, stopping in front of Tredway.

"Nothing but this man's death."

"Evidence can be obtained from Copper Centre to prove our friend's innocence," pleaded the Unknown.

"That will take time, we can't wait. This man has got to die, and die he shall at once, and by gosh, if you give me any more of your jaw, I'll string the whole blame crowd up. Guess you people make me tired."

"You cannot make the same answer to me," said Edith, boldly confronting Tredway.

"Hush, Edith, hush!" said Dick, quickly. "Don't make this man worse."

"He dare not lay hands on me," said Edith, proudly. "I have a proposition to make, and I insist that it shall be listened to."

Edith's beauty and daring made a deep impression on Tredway and his friends, and her assurance so as to tound them that no one interrupted her.

"My proposition is this," continued Edith. "You say Daniels is the thief. We say it is a man named Hart. I am satisfied when the two are together that Dupree, the man who has been robbed, will find he has made a mistake. They can be brought together, for we know where Hart is and will produce him."

"You know where he is," repeated Tredway, doubtfully.

"Yes, I give you my word we do, only we want time to lay our hands on him. You cannot refuse my request. We were going to capture him when you stopped us."

The Canadians conferred together for some time, their talk being extremely animated, as if they were not all in agreement.

"Miss," said Tredway, at length, turning towards Edith, "because you're a woman most of us have decided to give your friend a show. We will wait twenty-four hours for you to make good your offer. If you're not here to the minute, this man must swing. For twenty-four hours he is safe. Have no fear. Though I'm rough, miss, as you've seen, I'm square. I don't go back on my word."

"He is saved!" cried the Unknown. "Come, Ned, we won't lose a minute. Ye gods and little fishes, what a day this has been!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### SAVED BY A SHOT.

"You spoke just in time, Edith," said Ned, as they were walking away. "Very lucky you hit on that idea."

"Very fortunate it was Edith who proposed it," observed Dick. "If either of us had done so, they'd have refused the request offhand."

"I look upon Daniels as quite safe now," said Ned. "Don't you, Zed?"

"Why, yes," answered the Unknown. "Hart's hiding place is not very far away. We can reach it in a few hours, capture him and get right back. All this trouble is caused by those Canadians. Imagine, they'd never heard of Young Klondike. Where in thunder have they been? By the Jumping Jeremiah, they're little better than savages!"

Talking as they went, all in good humor over the turn affairs had taken, the ground was quickly covered. The Unknown, who knew the secret of Hart's hiding place, went on in front, acting as guide. Leaving the level ground that ran alongside Caribou creek, the detective now struck out for the mountains, and naturally progress at once became slower.

"Is it far now, Zed?" asked Young Klondike, as they were climbing up the snow-covered rocks.

"About three miles, Ned."

"I'm glad it's no more."

"Why, are you tired?"

"No, but just look round, Zed; unless I'm very much mistaken, we're going to have a storm. There's every sign of it."

These words made everybody anxious, for they knew that Ned's judgment was rarely at fault in such matters. In less than fifteen minutes the storm broke loose. The wind blew furiously, right in their faces, and the snow almost blinded them. To make matters worse darkness came on.

"I'm gone!" shouted Dick, suddenly.

The cry was followed by a crash, and the rest of the party were horror-stricken.

"Dick! Dick!" cried Ned, "where are you? Speak!"

"We must find him!" cried the Unknown. "Dick! Dick!"

No reply came. The fears of the boy's friends increased.

"I'm going right down where he fell!" cried Ned. "I can't stay here doing nothing. Come with me, Zed, and show me a light."

It was dangerous work to climb down these slippery rocks in the darkness, but the thought of Dick's peril was uppermost in Ned's mind, and he was ready to brave any danger for the sake of his friend.

"If he could only say something," said the Unknown. "That would give us a clew."

"Help! Help!" cried a faint voice.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ned, intensely relieved to hear the sound of his friend's voice. "He's alive at any rate. We're coming, Dick? Where are you?"

"Here."

In a few minutes they had him on his feet again. He was quite unhurt, having fallen down the rocks into a deep drift formed of soft snow. This had almost buried him, and it was because he was covered with snow that he could not make himself heard for some time.

"Dick's all right, Edith!" cried Ned, for Edith was in a fearful state of mind up above.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Edith. "This is a regular blizzard. I can't get along."

"We must try. Remember, the life of Ben Daniels is at stake," said Ned, "and every minute counts."

"Yes; try, Edith," urged the Unknown.

Bravely they all struggled on, Edith fighting the storm as well as the others. At last, it was apparent to everybody that a halt must be made.

"We must seek shelter," cried Ned. "To go on is certain death, for we shall all perish in the drifts."

"What shelter can we find?" asked Dick.

"We'll take any. How about this rock?" Ned said. "It shields us from the wind, anyway."

It was no time to be particular, and so they took the first chance that offered itself. They were sheltered from the wind, and the snow passed them by, but they had to endure the cold, which was intensely piercing.

For hours they remained thus, cold in body, and sad at heart, for as they waited they knew that their friend's life was slipping away.

Several times Ned made his way around to the windward side of the rock which sheltered them, hoping to find that the storm had abated, and as soon as the wind had lessened in violence, the journey was resumed.

"Three hours wasted!" cried Ned.

"Never mind that," said the Unknown, in good spirits again.

"The wind's dying down every minute, and the snow's almost gone. An hour's walk will bring us to Hart's den. Allow, say, an hour to fix things up with him, and four hours to get back. Why, Ned, we've got lots of time. It's dead easy. The country is still safe."

"Shall we find the place in the dark?"

"Why, yes, and for a certain reason I don't think it will be a hard matter, either," answered the detective.

This reply was somewhat obscure, but no remark was made.

Silently they trudged along, all being now in good shape except the bank agent. This kind of life was new to him, and he confessed that he was nearly exhausted.

A drink from the Unknown's flask, which was used only for medicinal purposes, gave the man some strength, and the prospect of being near his journey's end, further revived him.

"I thought so!" cried the Unknown suddenly.

"A light!" exclaimed Ned, glancing up.

"A fire, Ned, a fire," continued the detective. "He has a fire in his hiding place as I expected, and that is the light we're looking at now."

"He must feel safe," said Dick, "to be daring enough to light a fire."

"With all their smartness," said the Unknown, "these fellows act foolishly at times. I was following my man in Australia in '83. I could tell you such a yarn about it."

"Drop it! We don't want to hear it!" cried Ned. "Come, come, what's to be done? You've seen this place by daylight, and ought to be able to advise us."

"And so I can, dear boy. We will creep right up to the mouth of the cave, and when we show ourselves suddenly, Hart will have nothing to do but surrender. If he doesn't he will be shot down."

"He must be taken alive if possible," cried Ned. "I want to hand him over to the Canadians as I said we would."

"That goes, Ned, I'll remember what you say. I'm off," said the Unknown. "After me, all of you, and no noise mind."

They were silently nearing Hart's hiding place. Their lantern had been extinguished, and there was nothing to show their whereabouts.

Suddenly a surprising event happened.

No rifle was fired, but a shower of rocks began to fall about them, not small stones but great rocks which would have dashed their brains out if their heads had been struck.

"I'm hit!" cried the bank agent, with a howl of pain.

"Not badly?" asked Ned, anxiously.

"No, but it pains me. A rock caught me on the shoulder. We shall be killed if we stay here."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed a voice from above, which they knew to be Hart's.

"So you don't like your reception, eh? Thought to take old Hi Hart by surprise, did you? Not much! I saw that little runt of a detective hanging around, and I knowed you'd be on hand pretty quick. Down with the rocks, Jack! I mean to smash the whole crowd this time!"

Indian Jack went to work with a will now. Ned and the others remained motionless, saved from death by a projecting ledge of rock which kept the others from falling upon them.

"Stones all gone!" said Indian Jack at last.

"Guess they've done the job," answered Hart. "Can't hear a sound, now, Jack, so I'm thinking we've sent the whole show over into the gorge. We'll have a look in the morning."

"He thinks we're dead," whispered Ned. "A good chance to surprise him."

"But he's at the mouth of the cave," replied the Unknown, "so we can't."

"We must attack the place then?"

"And be shot down, Ned. It won't do," said the

detective, "for he has prepared his defenses. From behind the stone breastwork he's raised, he could shoot us all down without being hit."

Edith and Dick fired together now, and Hart laughed defiantly.

"Waste your powder, Young Klondike!" he shouted. "Blaze away! you won't hurt us. So you are not dead after all!"

"We must negotiate," said Ned, after a moment's thought.

"It's evident that he has the best end of this deal, and in order to save Daniels we must make terms."

"It's pretty tough on us," said Dick, "to have to crawl in front of this man."

"Just listen to what I have to say, Dick. Hello, Hart!" shouted Ned as loud as he could.

"You ain't dead, Young Klondike!" answered Hart. "What's up now?"

"Let's call a halt. We've been fighting long enough. Hand back our gold and we'll let you go."

"Say, that kind of talk don't go here. If any feller wants any of my dust, by gosh, he has to take it from me. You hear that? Well, Young Klondike, that's the last word you'll hear me say."

Ned called to him again, but he received no reply.

"So that negotiation, as you call it, was soon over," said Dick. "Hello! where's the Unknown?"

"Great Heavens! he can't have fallen down the rocks!"

"I saw him climbing up towards Hart's cave while you were talking," said Edith.

"That's good! Then we needn't worry about him. I'm afraid, Edith, that Daniels is a doomed man. It's certain death to attack Hart. Two men can hold that cave against twenty."

"Not if you know the way in, dear boy," said the Unknown from above.

"So you're back again, Zed?"

"Yes, Ned, and with good news, too. By the Jumping Jeremiah, we have Hart this time! He doesn't know the surprise that is being prepared for him. Listen, Ned."

"Go on. We're quiet enough."

"I've found another way into Hart's cave."

"You have?" cried Ned, surprised at the startling piece of news. "Where?"

"By the roof. Mind, I don't lay claim to being extra smart because I've found it out. It was an accident," continued the Unknown, "and I was blame near my end, I tell you. While I was prospecting up above I nearly went through a hole, and by gosh! looking down I saw the flame from Hart's fire, so I knew what it meant."

"We can get in that way?"

"Sure, Ned."

"We must lead him to think we are still here," said Young Klondike. "Edith and the agent shall stay where they are, and begin a hot fire on the mouth of the cave. This will make Hart think an attack is going to begin. Dick, I and you, Zed, will drop down into the cave and finish him."

"A good plan," assented the Unknown, "and we can't get to work too soon."

The darkness which had appeared to interfere with their plans befriended them now, for it prevented Hart from noticing Ned and his two companions as they climbed up the rocks to the bluff above the mouth of the cave.

Edith, timing the proper moment well, began to fire and so did the agent.

"Blaze away!" shouted Hart, defiantly. "Chip as many corners off the rocks as you please. It don't hurt me. Ha! Ha! Young Klondike struck a snag when he ran up against me."

"And what did you strike?" said a voice behind Hart.

The man turned instantly, and so did Indian Jack. Hart's face became ashy pale, and though he tried to speak he could not utter a sound.

There stood Ned, Dick and the Unknown, all with their rifles to their shoulders, covering Hart and Indian Jack, and holding both men at their mercy.

"Do you surrender?" asked Ned.

"That's my answer!" exclaimed Hart, throwing down his rifle. "Your hand's too strong, pard, and I know when I'm beat."

"We have them!" cried Ned, going to the mouth of the cave.

He was eager to let Edith know, and she and the girl came up at once.

"Shall we tie their hands behind them?" asked Dick.

"No, we must do nothing to delay their movements. See, day's coming, so they can't run away, for we can cover them with our guns. Off with you, Hart, get a move on you right now!"

"Say, if you're going to do for me, why wait? Get the job over, pard."

"Never mind what I mean to do," answered Ned, sternly. "You obey my orders, that's all I want."

There was still a chance of saving the life of Ben Daniels, but it all depended on the speed with which they were able to get back. At noon precisely the twenty-four hours grace expired, and Ned was satisfied that Dick Tredway and his Canadian friends would not wait another instant.

Hart could not understand the frantic haste which Young Klondike displayed, and when he asked for an explanation none was given him.

On they went, falling sometimes in their eagerness, but picking themselves up and going on again as fast as ever.

"Two minutes to noon!" cried the Unknown now.

"We are in time!" exclaimed Ned. "We have only this small hill to climb."

They breasted it at a run, making Hart and Indian Jack, their prisoners, do the same, and breathless they arrived at the top.

Then a cry of horror burst from their lips.

"Stop! Stop!" cried Ned.

"We have the man!" shouted the Unknown.

"But we are too late!" added Dick.

Just as they reached the summit of the hill, poor old Daniels, with the rope around his neck, was lifted off the ground and strung up to the tree.

The Canadians took no notice of the frantic cries of Young Klondike and his friends. In a moment Daniels would be strangled.

Suddenly a sharp report rang out, the rope which was around the tree parted, and Daniels dropped to the ground.

Edith had saved the old miner's life by an extraordinary shot, even for her. Seeing Daniels' peril, and that not a moment was to be lost, she had fired without any delay, and the bullet severed the cord by which the man was hanging.

The Canadians, furious, were about to attack Young Klondike and his friends, when Dupree, the man who had been robbed, interfered.

"They have the right man now," he cried. "I made a mistake. The other is innocent."

Hart protested his innocence, but unfortunately for him, certain papers were discovered on his person which had belonged to Dupree, and he could not explain how they had come into his possession.

What happened to him and his partner, Indian Jack, is not precisely known, for Young Klondike and his friend, having recovered the gold in the cave, went on to Tanana, but it is certain that after this day neither of the two scoundrels were ever seen again.

It was in Hart's cave that all the gold that had been stolen was found, and Daniels' share of it was given to him. The rest was transported to Juneau by the bank agent.

Young Klondike made Daniels a present of the Ice Boat Express, as he had no intention of going back to the Valdes glacier at present.

Young Klondike, at another time, found himself involved in adventures even more startling than the ones just narrated. These will be found fully described in the next number of this series, entitled: "YOUNG KLONDIKE AND THE MAD MINER; OR, LOST IN THE GREAT SWAMP."



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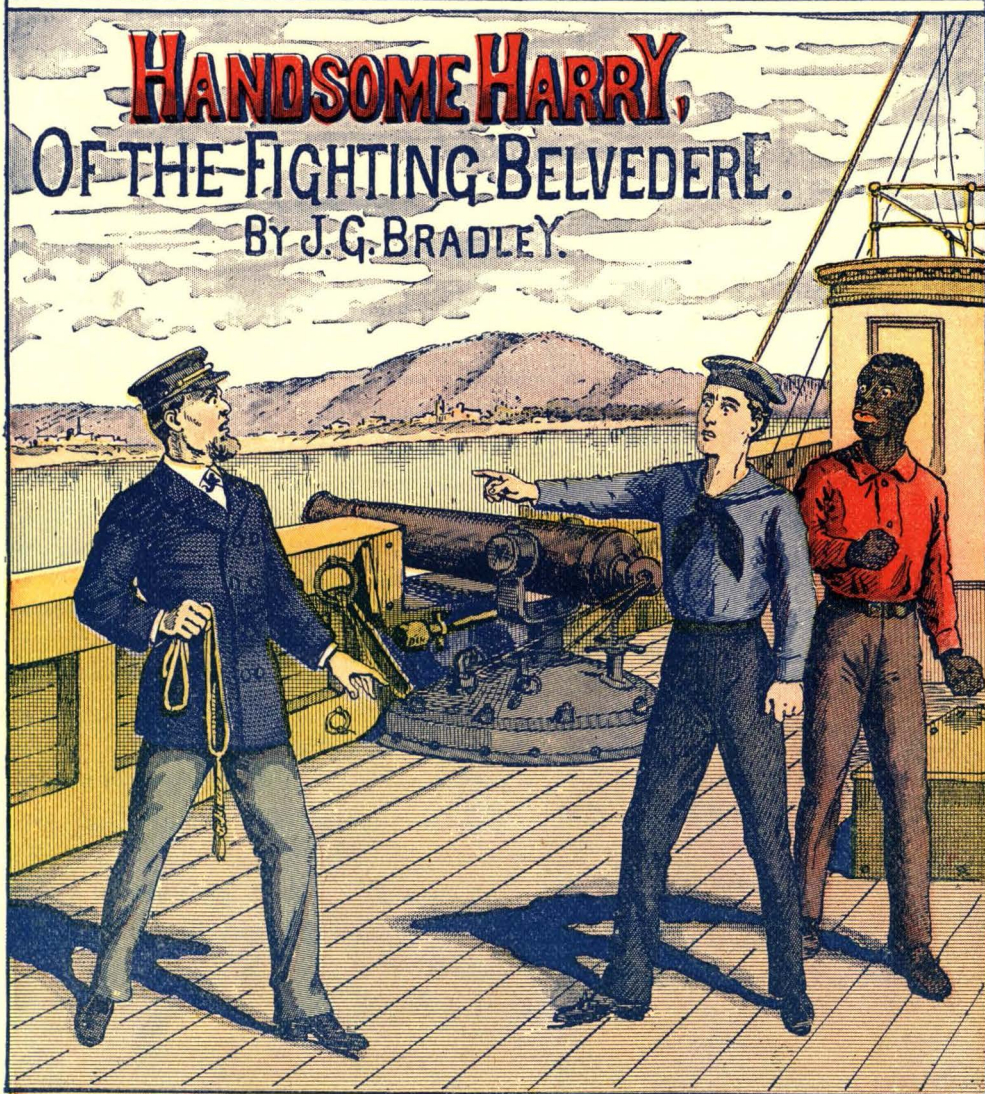
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"Mind you don't commit yourself, Grunt," said a quiet voice beside him, and the boatswain, turning, beheld a handsome young fellow, whom the crew called Captain Harry to his face, and Handsome Harry behind his back.